NATION

This February was warmest ever on record: EU Climate

>> Page: 4 <<

BUSINESS

Market edges higher to settle at fresh lifetime highs again

>> Page: 7 <<

SPORTS

Rohit, Jaiswal pummel England after Yadav, Ashwin spin show

>> Page: 8 <<

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 8 MARCH 2024 | FRIDAY | BENGALURU | 27 SHABAN, 1445 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 51 | Pages: 8

IT firms urge employees to minimise water usage

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Bengaluru, often referred to as India's Silicon Valley, is facing a severe water crisis. As the sweltering summer approaches, the water crsis worsens. Amid the crisis, Outer Ring Road Companies Association (ORRCA) -- City's tech corridor—urged its employees to use water judiciously. ORRCA represents various technology parks, IT and software companies spanning 17km from KR Puram to Central Silk Board.

In a press release, the association said, "As responsible citizens, all companies and tech parks should put in measures to save water as much as possible. We (ORRCA) also urge Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) and relevant authorities to take the right measures to bridge the gap between demand and supply for both corporates and residences.

Fixed prices for water tankers

After complaints of private water tankers fleecing residents, BWSSB, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and Bengaluru Urban district administration have fixed the price caps based on the quantity of water and the distance of delivery place.

Private water tankers were accused of fleecing residents amid the water crisis **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

BWSSB, which is responsible for the water supply in the IT capital, has even hired 200 water tankers to supply water on contract basis for a four-month period.

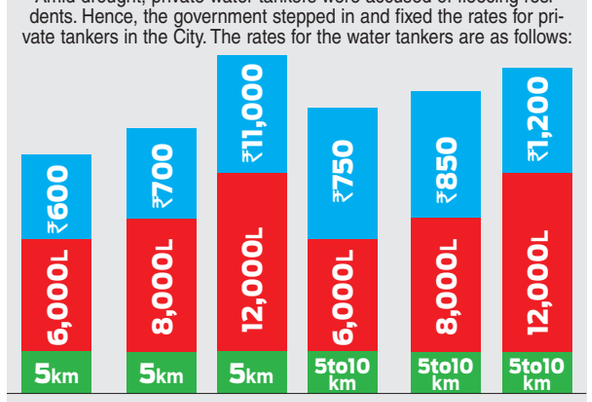
Bengaluru Urban district administration standardised the tanker rates following an appeal from the BWSSB. For a distance within 5 km, a 6,000-litre water tanker will cost Rs 600. An 8,000 litre and 12,000 litre tanker will cost Rs 700 and Rs 1,000 respectively. These rates are applicable along with GST.

For distances beyond 5 km and within 10 km, a 6,000 litre water tanker has been fixed at Rs 750. For an 8,000 litre and 12,000 litre tanker, one will have to shell out Rs 850 and Rs 1,200 respectively.

Around 60 per cent of Bengaluru's population depends on tanker water. Several residents have complained of private tankers charging anywhere between Rs 1,800-Rs 2,000 for a 12,000 litre tanker. *—Salar News*

GOVT CAPS WATER TANKER RATES

Amid drought, private water tankers were accused of fleecing residents. Hence, the government stepped in and fixed the rates for private tankers in the City. The rates for the water tankers are as follows:



*GST is applicable to the above charges

BENGALURU'S WOMEN WARRIORS

In the vibrant city of Bengaluru, there exists a legion of unsung champions. These are the women who, without any spotlight on them, work tirelessly to sustain themselves and their families. Salar News spoke to 8 such women who matter. Among them is a domestic helper, who darts from one household to another; a pourakarmika, who keeps our streets clean; a construction worker, who shapes the City's skyline. Their contributions are immeasurable. Through their stories, we pay homage to the resilience and dedication of women, who form the backbone of our community.

>>>More on Page 3

Illegal elephant tusk trade busted in City, 7 arrested

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

With the arrest of seven accused from the outskirts of Bengaluru, Directorate of Revenue (DRI) officers claimed to have busted a syndicate's efforts to illicitly trade elephant tusks. The interception of three suspects in an autorickshaw on Wednesday led to the recovery of ivory tusks concealed in a large bag in their possession. Further swift action led to the arrest of four additional accomplices involved in facilitating the illegal trade, said the Ministry of Finance in a statement.

The two elephant tusks, totaling 6.8kg, were recovered and seized as per Section 50 of Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972.

—PTI

Govt declares Qasim Gujjar designated terrorist: Shah

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Narendra Modi government on Thursday declared Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operative Mohammad Qasim Gujjar, the mastermind of several terror attacks, a designated terrorist.

Announcing the government's decision, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said LeT operative Gujjar has caused numerous deaths and injuries with terror attacks and is involved in planning a war against India. "Anyone found involved in activities against the unity and integrity of the nation will be dealt with ruthlessly," Shah posted on X. Gujjar alias Salman alias Suleman with the intention to wage war against the country has been involved in carrying out a wide-range of terrorist activities.

—PTI

PM visits J&K for 1st time after Art 370 abrogation

He says J&K is touching new heights of development

SRINAGAR, 7 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asserted that Jammu and Kashmir is "breathing freely" after the abrogation of Article 370 and pledged accelerated progress over the next five years.

Modi said the new Jammu and Kashmir has the spark for the future in its eyes and "140 crore citizens feel at peace when they see the smiling faces of the people of Jammu and Kashmir".

He also criticised dynastic politics that "plagued the region", underscoring the transformative impact of the decision to abrogate Article 370 in 2019.

This was Modi's first visit to Kashmir since the Centre abrogated the special status given to the erstwhile state and bifurcated it into two Union territories -- Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh -- on August 5, 2019.

Narendra Modi during the 'Viksit Bharat, Viksit Jammu & Kashmir' programme, in Srinagar, on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

"Jammu and Kashmir has broken the shackles after the abrogation of Article 370," he said.

The rally at the Bakshi Stadium here, was held amidst stringent security arrangements. The city, south of Jhelum, was converted into a fortress with only people having valid passes allowed to proceed towards the venue.

Modi inaugrated projects worth more than Rs 6,400 crore at the 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Jammu Kashmir' programme.

The projects included holistic agriculture development programme worth about Rs 5,000 crore and multiple projects related to the tourism sector worth more than Rs 1,400 crore under 'Swadesh Darshan' and 'PRASHAD' scheme including the project for 'Integrated Development of Hazratbal Shrine', Srinagar, officials said.

He also launched the 'Dekho Apna Desh People's Choice Tourist Destination Poll' and 'Chalo India Global Diaspora Campaign', and announced tourist destinations selected under Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD) Scheme.

He also distributed appointment orders to about 1,000 new government recruits of Jammu and Kashmir and interacted with the beneficiaries of various government schemes. *—PTI*

Minor girl gangraped in Tumakuru

TUMAKURU, 7 MARCH

Three youth have been arrested for allegedly raping a minor girl during the annual fair at Siddaganga Mutt here, police said on Thursday. According to police, the girl was sitting with her friend atop a nearby hill during the fair on 4 March. Three youths who were keeping a watch on them, shot a video and blackmailed her saying that they would make her video public. They then took her to Bandepalya area near here and allegedly raped her. Based on her complaint, police arrested the three accused under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

PHOTO: PTI

—PTI

Centre hikes DA for its staff by 4%

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Centre on Thursday hiked Dearness Allowance (DA) to 50 per cent of basic pay from the existing rate of 46 per cent effective from 1 January 2024, benefitting over 1 crore employees and pensioners ahead of general elections.

Union Cabinet has approved to release of an additional installment of DA to Central Government employees and Dearness Relief (DR) to pensioners from 1 January, 2024, representing an increase of 4 percentage points over the existing rate of 46 per cent of the basic pay/pension, to compensate against price rise, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said after the Cabinet meeting.

PHOTO: PTI

The combined impact on the exchequer on account of both DA and DR would be Rs 12,869 crore per annum. The impact would be Rs 15,014 crore during the year 2024-25 (January 2024 to February 2025).

With the increase in DA, transport allowance, canteen allowance, and deputation allowance among others have been increased by 25 per cent. House Rent Allowance has been raised from 27 per cent, 19 per cent, and 9 per cent of basic pay to 30 per cent, 20 per cent, and 10 per cent, respectively.

Benefits under gratuity have been increased by 25 per cent with an increase ceiling of Rs 25 lakh from the existing Rs 20 lakh.

The increase in DA and DR by the accepted formula, is based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission.

The decision is likely to benefit 49.18 lakh central government employees. *—PTI*

K'TAKA TO BAN OVER THE COUNTER SALE OF ACID

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Karnataka is planning to ban over-the-counter sales of acid to restrict its availability, Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Thursday, in the wake of an acid attack on three female students in Dakshina Kannada district. He said it will be ensured that only authorised chemical dealers are permitted to sell it, adding that the Director General of Police will be writing a letter to Commerce and Industries department soon in this regard. *—PTI*

DELAY IN DATA RELEASE

ADR moves SC against SBI over electoral bonds

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) has moved a contempt petition in Supreme Court against State Bank of India for not complying with the top court direction to disclose details of electoral bonds to Election Commission.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan for ADR mentioned the plea before a bench led by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and apprised the top court that State Bank of India has filed an application for extension which is likely to be listed on Monday.

Advocate Bhushan urged the top court to list ADR's plea along with SBI's application. CJI asked advocate Bhushan to complete the pre-listing formalities and then they will consider listing it.

As State Bank of India (SBI) missed the deadline to submit the details, it has moved Supreme Court seeking an extension of time till 30 June to submit details of Electoral Bonds to Election Commission of India. SBI in its application said that it needs extra time to disclose details of electoral bonds encashed by political parties.

ADR, one of the petitioners in the matter, said that two days before the expiry of the stated deadline for SBI to submit information concerning electoral bonds to the Election Commission of India, SBI has filed the application, which is mala fide and demonstrated wilful and deliberate disobedience & defiance of the judgment passed by the Constitution Bench of the top court.

PHOTO: PTI

ADR submitted that SBI has deliberately filed the said application at the last moment to ensure that the details of the donor and the amount of donations are not disclosed to the public before the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. "The said application neither discloses the progress made so far & steps taken to comply with the judgment dated 15 February, 2024, nor it shows even part- compliance of the judgment passed by this Court," ADR said. *—ANI*

BJD, BJP HINT AT ALLIANCE IN ODISHA

BHUBANESWAR, 7 MARCH

Although there was no formal announcement regarding a pre-poll alliance between the ruling BJD and the Opposition BJP in Odisha, leaders from both parties hinted at a mutual tie-up before the Lok Sabha and assembly elections.

While BJD leaders held a marathon meeting at Naveen Niwas, the residence of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, here on Wednesday, the BJP leaders had a similar meeting in the national capital, discussing election matters, including a potential alliance.

After over three hours of discussion, BJD vice-president and MLA Debi Prasad Mishra acknowledged discussions about a possible alliance with the BJP but did not explicitly confirm its formation.

"Biju Janata Dal will prioritise the greater interests of the people of Odisha. Yes, there were discussions on the issue (alliance)," Mishra told reporters. Claiming that Odisha had progressed significantly under Naveen Patnaik's leadership, Mishra emphasised the need to take the state's development to the next level.

BJD leader said extensive discussion were held under the Patnaik with the senior leaders of the party regarding the strategy of the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections. *—PTI*

BIG AI PUSH

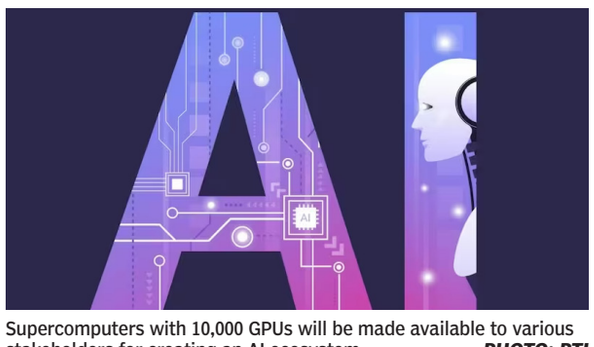
Cabinet approves Rs 10L cr for India AI Mission

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Cabinet on Thursday approved the India AI Mission with an outlay of Rs 10,372 crore for five years to encourage AI development in the country, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said.

The approved corpus will be used to build a high-end scalable AI ecosystem in public-private partnership mode. "With an outlay of Rs 10,372 crore, one very ambitious India AI Mission that will encourage AI segment and ongoing research in this field...has been approved by the cabinet," Goyal said.

The mission will be implemented through the IndiaAI Independent Business Division (IBD) under Digital India Corporation (DIC).



Supercomputers with 10,000 GPUs will be made available to various stakeholders for creating an AI ecosystem **PHOTO: PTI**

The minister, briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, said supercomputing capacity, comprising over 10,000 GPUs (graphics processing unit), will be made available to various stakeholders for creating an AI ecosystem.

Startups, academia, researchers and industry will be given access to the AI supercomputing infrastructure established under the India AI Mission, Goyal said.

- The mission will be implemented through the IndiaAI Independent Business Division

Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar on social media platform X said that AI is poised to be the kinetic enabler for India's digital economy.

The minister said that the mission will benefit states like Kerala, which, for years, missed the bus in creating a robust tech ecosystem.

An India AI Innovation Centre (IAIC) will be set up under the mission. The IAIC will be a leading academic institution, ensuring streamlined implementation and retention of top research talent.

Funds approved by the Cabinet will enable IAIC to spearhead the development and deployment of foundational models, with a specific emphasis on indigenous Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) and domain-specific models, leveraging edge and distributed computing for optimal efficiency.

The financial outlay will fortify the India AI Startup Financing mechanism, facilitating streamlined access to funding for budding AI startups and catalysing their journey from product development to commercialisation. *—PTI*

Govt extends ₹300 LPG subsidy under Ujjwala till 2025

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Ahead of general elections, the government on Thursday announced the extension of Rs 300 per LPG cylinder subsidy to poor women under the Ujjwala Yojana for the next fiscal starting 1 April.

The government had in October, 2023, hiked the subsidy from Rs 200 per 14.2-kg cylinders for up to 12 refills per year to Rs 300 per bottle. The Rs 300 per cylinder subsidy was for the current fiscal, which ends on 31 March.

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has now decided to extend this subsidy to 2024-25, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said. The move, likely to benefit nearly 10 crore families, will cost the government Rs 12,000 crore.

Centre had hiked the subsidy in October 2023 **PHOTO: PTI**

To make LPG, a clean cooking fuel, available to rural and deprived poor households, the government launched Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) in May 2016 to provide deposit-free LPG connections to adult women of poor households. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SALAR

Pilgrims flock to Kolar, Chikkaballapur for Mahashivratri

KOLAR, 7 MARCH

Devotees from Karnataka and neighbouring States are gearing up to celebrate Mahashivratri on Friday at two major pilgrimage centres in Kolar and Chikkaballapur. Kotilingeshwara Temple in Kolar's Kammasandra and Isha Foundation located near Avalagurki village in Chikkaballapur is all set to receive thousands of visitors seeking the blessings of Lord Shiva. Kammasandra village, which was a tiny village a few years back, has now become a popular pilgrim centre. The main attraction of this pilgrimage centre is the 108ft tall Shiva Linga and 75ft high Nandi, besides over a dozen temples of various deities. Adiyogi temple at Isha Foundation is also drawing huge crowds, especially on Sundays and festival days. BMTC has drawn up a package tour to the foundation on Friday under which the visitors can also visit other temples including the famed Ranga Stala and Bhogi Nandeeswara temple. *—Salar News*

Malur villagers protest as 2 youths die in accident

MALUR, 7 MARCH

Villagers of Mittaganahalli in Malur taluk today staged a demonstration along with the dead bodies of two youths who were killed in a road accident last night. The villagers were urging the authorities to initiate steps to end the rash driving of tipper vehicles used for quarry activities. Later Malur legislator KY Nanje Gowda arrived at the village and assured the villagers that he would take up the issue with the concerned authorities and also assured the kin of the deceased would get compensation. The agitation was called off after his assurance. Sandeep and Suman both residents of Mittaganahalli were killed on the spot when a tipper rammed onto their bike near Chikkakunthur village around 9.00 pm on Wednesday. A case has been registered at Malur police station. *—Salar News*

Three youths drown in Cauvery River

KUSHALANAGAR, 7 MARCH

An incident unfolded in Kudige near Kushalanagar, where three youths tragically lost their lives after drowning in Cauvery River. The victims, identified as Vinod, Sachin, and Srinivas, had went out for a swim and the trio reportedly succumbed to the strong currents of the river. There are suspicions that the three individuals, who were swimming together, encountered difficulties in the water and were unable to stay afloat. It is believed that they arrived in the same vehicle, which remains parked by the riverbank. Authorities from Kushalanagar rural police promptly responded to the scene, and further investigations into the incident continue. *—Salar News*

Medical kit scandal unearthed in Mandya

MANDYA, 7 MARCH

In a startling revelation, officials from the health department in Mandya district have exposed the illicit trade of medical kits utilised for feticide, signalling a troubling trend of indiscriminate female foeticide prevailing in the vicinity. Between 1 January, 2023, and 12 December, 2023, an astounding 6,626 Medical Termination of Pregnancy kits were distributed across 12 wholesale drug stores in the district. These kits, comprising mifepristone and misoprostol tablets valued at Rs 440, were discovered to be sold by drug shops at marked-up prices, reaching as high as Rs 1000-2000 per kit. This exploitation of crucial MTP kits, designed to preserve the lives of both mother and child is deeply disconcerting. *—Salar News*

City's worst water crisis leaves IT capital high & dry

IMD has attributed the scanty rains to El Nino effect

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

A coaching centre in Vijayanagar in Bengaluru asked its students to attend classes online due to an 'emergency' for a week.

Similarly, a school on Bannerghatta Road shut down, asking the students to attend classes virtually.

The 'emergency' is the acute water crisis.

Karnataka, especially its capital, is facing one of the worst water crises in recent years due to poor rainfall in 2023.

Indian Meteorology Department has attributed the scanty rains to the El Nino effect.

One can gauge the grim situation from the fact that water tankers were seen inside Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's office residence on Kumarakrupa Road.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said the borewell in his house in Sadashivanagar has gone dry for the first time. This happened even though Sadashivanagar is located next to Sankey Lake.

Water tankers running frequently on the Bengaluru roads have become a common sight now. On normal days, the water suppliers used to charge Rs 700 to Rs 800 per tanker but due to excess demand, they are charging somewhere between Rs 1,500 and Rs 1,800 per tanker, said Shivakumar.

The office-bearers of the Residents' Welfare Associations (RWA) in the City are facing the brunt of its members for doing nothing to save them from the water crisis.

Karnataka, especially its capital Bengaluru, is facing one of the worst water crises in recent years due to poor rainfall in 2023 *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

"We are a family of six members. A tanker of water lasts for five days even if we use it judiciously. It means we need six tankers of water a month, which will cost us about Rs 9,000 a month. How long can we spend money like this?" Sharaschandra, a resident of Uttarahalli in Bengaluru, said.

Shivakumar, who is in charge of Bengaluru Development, announced taking over private tankers and private borewells to meet the water demand. Even milk tankers will be used to supply water.

The government is also mulling over fixing the rate for water per tanker.

According to Siddaramaiah, out of 136 Taluks in Karnataka, 123 Taluks have been declared drought-hit and 109 are severely affected.

According to IMD scientist A Prasad, there was an El Nino effect last year, which is moderate this year too but is likely to decline. Its effect was evident as summer set in the third and fourth week of February, which otherwise happens only in March in Bengaluru, he explained.

Bengaluru recorded 36 degrees Celsius temperature on Wednesday (March 6), the officer said.

"36 degrees Celsius was not the highest. There were occasions when temperatures went up to 37.3 degrees in March, 1986 but that happened towards the end of the month. We still have 24 days to go this March," Prasad pointed out. Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) as well as the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike are under pressure to provide water to people.

A BWSSB official said the situation is grim because the Krishnaraja Sagar Dam in Mandya district from where Cauvery water is supplied to Bengaluru does not have adequate water. *—PTI*

'Will stage protests if 'crisis' not solved in 7 days'

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya warned of protests in front of Vidhana Soudha if Congress government in the State failed to address the drinking water crisis in Bengaluru soon.

Following a meeting with Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar, Surya said that if the water problem is not resolved within a week, the Karnataka BJP brass would lead protests. "The government, despite being aware of having to face this situation, failed to take up precautionary measures. As a result of this negligence, today, the people of the City are facing this tough water crisis," he said.

"This shows sheer neglect of the decision makers and their irresponsibility towards Bengaluru."

Lambasting the Siddaramaiah government for attempting to address the issue "unscientifically", Surya in a Tweet also offered suggestions to BWSSB for quick redressal of the issue such as Treated water must be provided for non-potable usage for bulk users like industries & in the construction sector and many more. *—Salar News*

BJP will win 24 of 28 LS seats: BSY

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Ahead of the Lok Sabha election, former Karnataka chief minister BS Yediyurappa on Thursday claimed that BJP will win 24 out of 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka.

"Yesterday, Amit Shah, the party's national President JP Nadda and I have discussed all Lok Sabha constituencies (of Karnataka) but so far nothing has been finalised. I think they may discuss this with the Prime Minister after that they'll come to some conclusion and in 2-3 days everything will be finalised...I am 100% confident that we are going to win 24 out of 28 Lok Sabha seats. We are putting all our efforts," said Yediyurappa.

On Wednesday, BJP's Central Election Committee met to decide on the candidates for 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka. BJP came out with its first list of 195 candidates across 16 States and Union Territories on 2 March.

In the 2019 general elections, BJP had won 25 out of the 28 seats. Congress and JD(S), headed by former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, fought Lok Sabha elections together and both parties won only one seat each.

Meanwhile, Congress' central election committee is also holding a meeting on 7 March in New Delhi, where it will finalise the first list of candidates for the Lok Sabha election in Karnataka, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

"We will have our final central election committee meeting on 7 March. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and I are going to Delhi on 7 March where we will finalise the (first) list of candidates," he said.

Both he and Siddaramaiah had held a meeting with the Congress general secretary in charge of Karnataka, Randeep Singh Surjewala, on Monday. Congress had scored a thumping victory in Assembly elections held in May 2023. Lok Sabha polls are likely to be held in April-May this year. *—ANI*

CCTV footage shows an unmasked image of the Bengaluru blast suspect travelling on a bus *PHOTO: CCTV GRAB*

LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

Kharge's son-in-law a front-runner for Kalaburagi seat

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

M Mallikarjun Kharge's son-in-law Radhakrishna Doddamani has emerged as the front-runner for Congress ticket to contest Lok Sabha elections on the home turf of the party's President.

The 81-year-old Kharge had won from Kalaburagi Lok Sabha segment twice but lost the 2019 polls.

"Kharge's hands are full. In addition to managing party affairs at the national level, he has to coordinate with INDIA partners", a party leader said. "Also, he has four more years of his term left in Rajya Sabha", he said, seeking to confirm reports that Kharge is not in favour of contesting from Kalaburagi. Priyank Kharge, who represents the Chittapur and is a Minister in the Siddaramaiah cabinet, is also not interested in throwing his hat in the ring. Party sources said the Congress President will take a final call on whether or not to contest the polls in consultation with top leaders including Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. Doddamani, who was initially reluctant to enter the fray, has been asked to be prepared to be fielded.

Doddamani *PHOTO: X*

Born in Kalaburagi, Doddamani has maintained a low profile; he has worked actively behind the scenes in managing and strategising for Kharge's successive electoral campaign. He is said to be popular especially in the Gurmitkal Assembly segment, which Kharge represented consecutively between 1972 and 2004. Congress' poll managers during a recent meeting with party legislators and leaders from the segment are said to have discussed Doddamani's probable candidacy, and about ensuring his victory. Kharge was defeated by BJP's Umesh Jadhav by 95,452 votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. *—PTI*

BJP may field Shettar and Bommai in LS polls

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

BJP which has plans to win big time in State in Lok Sabha polls, may field two of its former chief ministers -- Basavaraj Bommai and Jagadish Shettar. The duo is from the dominant Lingayat community, counted by the party as its core vote-base.

Veteran party leader BS Yediyurappa on Thursday said discussion in this regard was taken up with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the party's National President JP Nadda.

Yediyurappa also hinted that BJP may allot two to three seats to JD(S), on which Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be taking a final decision.

Reportedly, JD(S) may contest from Mandya, Hassan and Kolar.

Speculations are rife within BJP circles that Bommai, who is currently MLA from Shiggaon, may be fielded from Haveri, with the party's sitting MP Shivakumar Udasi announcing retirement from electoral politics.

Shettar may be fielded from Belagavi, currently represented by Mangala Angadi, the widow of former Union minister of State Suresh Angadi.

She had won with a margin of over 5,000 votes in 2021 bypolls against Congress strongman Satish Jarkiholi, when after the seat fell vacant due to her husband's death.

Basavaraj Bommai and Jagadish Shettar are from the dominant Lingayat community, BJP's core votebase *PHOTO: PTI*

- Veteran party leader BS Yediyurappa on Thursday said discussion in this regard was taken up with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the party's National President JP Nadda

BJP wants to replace Mangala with a strong candidate to retain the seat, and Shettar's name is doing the rounds.

Shettar, who had quit BJP to join Congress ahead of the Assembly polls last year on being denied the ticket, rejoined his old party in January.

Possibly a JD(S) candidate from may contest on BJP symbol, and it is likely to be noted cardiac surgeon and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda's son-in-law Dr CN Manjunath from Bengaluru Rural segment, where sitting MP and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's brother DK Suresh is likely to be Congress candidate once again.

There is also pressure from party workers on Gowda's son -- former CM and JD(S) state President HD Kumaraswamy -- to contest from the Vokkaliga bastion of Mandya, JD(S) sources added. *—PTI*

Rameshwaram cafe blast case, NIA team visits Ballari

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) team on Tuesday carried out investigations in Ballari City in connection with the Rameshwaram Cafe bomb blast case in Whitefield.

More than 10 officers fanned out across the City in the early hours of Thursday. It is said that the alleged bomber had travelled to Tumakuru from Bengaluru after carrying out the explosion and later he arrived in Ballari city.

Another NIA team had reached a Tumakuru bus stand where the suspect was said to have been seen. The officials have obtained CCTV footage from strategic vantage points in Tumakuru. According to the investigations, the accused had boarded a bus travelling towards Gokarna from Mantralayam in Andhra Pradesh. It is suspected that the bomber was in Bhatkal town in Uttara Kannada district.

The report highlights the bomber had gone to Sujatha Circle here in the City. NIA on Tuesday took into custody Naveed a resident of Mangaluru, Syeded Khail a resident of Bengaluru and Bijju a resident of Dakshina Kannada district as part of the investigations.

NIA on Wednesday released the photo of a man suspected of carrying out the explosion and announced a reward of Rs 10 lakh for providing information/ clues about him.

Home Minister G Parameshwara earlier had said that NIA has got a vital clue in this case. "We have got more important leads, as to the direction in which he (suspect) has gone and him having changed his clothes.

Some information cannot be revealed. We have got good leads in the last couple of days. I feel that he will be nabbed at the earliest," Parameshwara told reporters. Box with story

—Salar News with Agency

Rameshwaram Cafe to reopen today

A week after a blast at Rameshwaram Cafe in Brookefield here, the popular eatery is set to reopen the branch on Friday on the auspicious occasion of Shivaratri. According to the co-founders, Divya and Raghavendra Rao, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his deputy DK Shivakumar and Home Minister G Parameshwara are set to attend the reopening function at 6 pm. *—PTI*

MUDA presents ₹6.03 cr surplus budget

MYSURU, 7 MARCH

The Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) approved a savings budget of Rs 6.03 crore for the year 2024-25. The budget prioritises the construction of a group housing scheme, peripheral ring road, and scattered grade separators.

Presented by Commissioner GT Dinesh Kumar and chaired by President K Mari Gowda, the budget proposal includes Rs 831.80 crore for resource mobilisation and Rs 825.77 crore for various development works. It estimates a total resource of Rs 775.81 crore and a total expenditure of Rs 788.24 crore to be mobilised from all sources.

The budget allocation includes Rs 20 crore from house and land revenue, Rs 15 crore from account revenue and transfer fees, and Rs 10 crore from works supervision fees. Due to the approval of the Government for the Maha Yojana-2031, the 'park and open area development fee' has been cancelled for this year, while Rs 90 lakh is estimated from slum development fees.

PHOTO: SALAR

The Development Fund-I is estimated to contribute Rs 400 crore, while the allotment of civic amenities plots available in the authority's estates is expected to generate Rs 5.08 crore. *—Salar News*

BELOW-PAR SERVICE

Air India Express faces customers' flak

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKA
BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Air India started its subsidiary Air India Express in 2005 to make connectivity convenient across the country, provide shorter international hauls and improve the flying experience.

Unfortunately, customer dissatisfaction is growing with frequently delayed and cancelled flights. Passengers are allegedly not informed about delays or cancellations, customer care is non-existent, luggage goes missing or is lost and getting a refund is a Herculean task.

Air India Express flies more than 30 flights to and from Bengaluru, and yet it does neither have a functioning offline office nor a contact person in the City.

When Salar News visited the Air India office in JC Road, the officials had no information about their subsidiary airlines. The WhatsApp virtual assistance helpline has no option to address the grievances of the flyer.

The biggest grievance of customers is the airlines allegedly merging passengers of two flights into one, ultimately delaying the earlier flight due to a shortage of flyers.

The passengers of the first flight end up waiting for more than four hours in the airport.

"The flights are delayed or cancelled without prior notifications. The crew members at the airport are not well-trained to handle the questions of the frustrated customers. The airline needs to get a grip," told Abhishek Kumar, an IT employee who flew from Bengaluru to Ranchi, to Salar News.

Air India Express neither has a functioning office nor a contact person in Bengaluru *PHOTO: PTI*

Air India Express customer care officials were not reachable for comment on the issue when contacted.

Another flyer Naveen Swamy, an architect who cancelled his Air India Express flight from Bengaluru to Pune weeks ago, claims he is yet to receive a refund from the airline.

"Despite visiting the Air India Office at Unity Building in Bengaluru, I did not get my refund of about Rs 3,000," he said.

The complaints about the airline have spread across social media, including LinkedIn and X. Shashank Tiwari on LinkedIn said flying with Air India Express was his worst experience.

"I travelled with Air India Express from Varanasi to Bengaluru on 6 February. At Bengaluru airport, I received broken baggage and showed the same to airport crew Ajith who asked me to raise the concern to the id: blrapt@airindiaexpress, I was told a team would reach out to me within a week. It has been more than two weeks but there is no response from Air India Express," he said on LinkedIn. *—Salar News*

BENGALURU'S WOMEN WARRIORS

8th March is International Working Women's Day. Yes, that is the complete phrase. The day was to commemorate the anniversary of the strike by International Ladies Garment Workers Union and is celebrated in recognition of a woman's economic, social and political rights. It symbolises WORKING WOMEN'S STRUGGLE for "Bread and Roses" – bread representing economic struggle, and roses cultural struggle. Today is about women's right to education, employment, safe public spaces and the right over our bodies. Salar News brings you 8 tales of gritty women. They are our pourakarmikas, anganwadi workers, housemaids, construction workers & they all make the City our home

I remained unmarried to take care of my family

LALITHA, POLICE CONSTABLE

Lalitha, a 32-year-old police constable, stands tall amid the hustle and bustle of City life. The Kodigehalli native has been serving as a police constable for nine years. The daughter of a farmer, Lalitha has remained unmarried to fulfil her responsibilities as the eldest among four siblings. She paid for the education of her two brothers and helped them set up a business. Lalitha also paid for the wedding of her younger sister. She said the biggest struggle of her life was to complete her education without anyone's support. "Barely anyone supported me. I completed my bachelor's and master's degrees with great difficulty. I worked hard to get a well-paying job so that I can help my siblings get education," Lalitha said. She expressed her wish to get married if she finds a groom who can support her. On International Women's Day, Lalitha advocates for a societal shift, urging men to recognise and celebrate women's efforts daily. "Why should women be treated and celebrated only on birthdays or women's day? The work of women is always undervalued, especially homemakers. Men of the house comfortably say 'What were you doing all day'. This is not right. If family members are supportive, women can achieve great things."

Building homes gives me happiness

KANAKA - CONSTRUCTION WORKER

She doesn't have a permanent abode, but Kanaka loves to build someone's dream house. Kanaka and her husband, both construction workers, are from Davangere. They moved to Bengaluru after marriage, hoping for a better future. "I don't have a home. My home is where my husband is and I have been helping him with his work for 5 years. I go with him wherever his next project is," the 35-year-old woman said. Kanaka said her husband never made her feel they were poor. "He feeds me with three meals every day, ensuring that I don't go hungry to bed." She doesn't believe in Women's Day. "I believe in equality. My dream is to build my own house with my husband and help others to build their dream house too."

Rain or heat, we keep working

AMALU, POURAKARMIKA

"Rain or heat, nothing matters to us, we have to keep working," says Amalu, a pourakarmika (civic worker) in Bengaluru. Hailing from Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, this 48-year-old woman has dedicated 24 years of her life to serving the City. Amalu is married to a BBMP worker and they have three children — two sons and a daughter. "Despite our poverty, we made sure our kids are educated. We took loans for it but I do not regret it. My eldest son has completed LLB, my youngest son is a software engineer and my daughter has a double degree and is now married," Amalu said. Though her children are doing well, Amalu is working hard to not depend on anyone, earning about ₹24,000 per month. "Other pourakarmikas and I would be happy if our jobs were made permanent," she said. Amalu has no complaints about life whatsoever. About Women's Day, Amalu said more job opportunities should be created for women so that they are not dependent on anyone.

Text: Amina Afaq, Vaishnavi Gopalraj, Amullya Shivashankar, Aarati Krishna & Meghana Prasad

Photos: Mohammed Asad

My life is all about adjustments

LAKSHMI, ANGANWADI WORKER

Anganwadi worker Lakshmi believes in having hope, despite the adversities life throws at her. Despite facing financial limitations alongside her differently-abled husband, this 46-year-old mother of two daughters refuses to let hardship dim her spirit. From the crack of dawn until dusk, Lakshmi tends to the children of an Anganwadi nestled on the outskirts of the City, earning around Rs 11,800. While her older daughter is pursuing a BSc in animation in Dakshina Kannada district, the younger one is studying Second PU in the City. "Since animation is an expensive course, we had to send her to Moodbidri," Lakshmi said. Her husband's income from his role at an NGO adds around Rs 12,000 to their household coffers. "We cannot run our house from both of our incomes. But we adjust. Isn't adjusting a part of life?" she asked.

I was once a banker and Kannada teacher

K SELVI, VEGETABLE SELLER

In the heart of Vasanth Nagar, in the sweltering heat stands K Selvi, a 60-year-old vegetable vendor, her resilience shining through the beads of sweat glistening on her brow. For Selvi, who has been working as a vendor for over 40 years, Women's Day does not hold any particular importance. It is just another normal day for her who spends almost 10 hours at work. Selvi started selling veggies when she was 12 years old. Having completed her pre-university course, she worked briefly as an intern at Canara Bank. Later she donned the role of a Kannada teacher. Shunted by poverty and with no support, Selvi could not secure a permanent job, which drove her back to selling vegetables. "My biggest misery was when I couldn't afford proper treatment for my husband during the pandemic," said Selvi, whose husband died four years ago.

They said I would not make it, but I did

KAVITHA S, MAINTENANCE STAFF

Malls are favourite hangout spaces for all. But behind the glitz and glamour of the swanky buildings are the hundreds of nameless faces who toil for hours to ensure the visitors enjoy a clean space. Kavitha S is one such face. She left her quiet life in Chikkamagaluru for the hustle and bustle of Bengaluru and landed a job as a maintenance staff at Forum Mall, Kanakapura Road. Kavitha was driven by her desire to build a secure future for her daughter. "I am a mother of a single daughter. I moved to the City to work and take care of my child. I have always loved my profession. I will work till I am sure that my child can survive without me," she said. "People assumed I wouldn't be strong enough. But I never cared about what society had to say. I only thought about my daughter's well being and worked to give her a good life. Now that she is settled, I have nothing to worry about."

I had to contend with unfounded gossip

CHAMPAKAVATHI, FORMER BUS CONDUCTOR

Champakavathi, a 55-year-old former bus conductor with KSRTC, overcame numerous challengers to succeed in a male-dominated profession for 15 years. Navigating the bustling highways of Bengaluru, Chennai, and Tirupati, Champakavathi spent eight hours a day collecting tickets and ensuring passengers' safety. Starting her career at 20 years of age, with three children to support, she embarked on this journey despite her limited qualifications. Initially intimidated by the complexities of the job and the demanding long-distance routes, she sought treatment at NIMHANS for her migraines, which took six months to subside. Despite the initial hardships, she managed to provide for her children, get them good education and ensure that they are employed. Amid her triumphs, Champakavathi encountered adversity in the form of workplace gossip and unfounded accusations. A spinal cord injury altered her career trajectory, leading her to transition into an administrative role within the organisation.

I work for 13 hours a day so that my daughters can study

ABEEDA, DOMESTIC HELP

Working as a domestic helper isn't a walk in the park, but for 46-year-old Abeeda, it's the lifeline for providing sustenance and education to her two daughters. Every morning at 7, she embarks on her routine, walking on Thimmaiah Road and tending to six households, juggling cleaning and cooking duties. Her day ends at 8 pm. "I was just 19 when I married with hopes of a better life. But my husband's battle with alcoholism turned my life upside down. Domestic work became my only refuge," she said. Abeeda is the sole breadwinner and earns up to Rs 20,000 per month. "Every day my hands feel like they would fall off. Yet I push on, to fulfil my eldest daughter's dream of being a doctor." Abeeda said as a child she wanted to be a teacher but now it feels like a distant memory. Abeeda was surprised to know about International Women's Day. "Just one day is not enough to celebrate a woman's strength," she said.

PHOTO: COLLEGE WEBSITE

DU college gets hoax bomb threat, students evacuated

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Hours after a bomb threat message was received by a staff member at the Ram Lal Anand College of the Delhi University on Thursday, it has turned out to be a hoax, police said. "It is suspected that some mischievous element made the call from an international number," a police officer said, adding that the police might register an First Information Report (FIR) in the matter. The officer said searches were conducted across the campus for at least three hours after which the police declared the call as a hoax. Earlier, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Rohit Meena said the staff member received a call on WhatsApp at 9.34am. Subsequently, Students were evacuated.—*ANI*

Black magic: Man forced to dance on burning coal

THANE, 7 MARCH

Police have registered a case after some people in Maharashtra's Thane district allegedly forced a 75-year-old man to dance on burning coal as punishment over suspicion that he practised black magic. The man suffered burn injuries in the incident which took place in Kervele village in Murbad taluka on 4 March, adding that a probe was on into the case. In a video, which went viral on social media, some people are seen holding the man by his hands and a crowd shouting and cheering as he is forced to dance on the burning coal. A religious event was organised by locals near a temple in the village and at that time 15-20 people allegedly barged into the man's house and forced him to dance on burning coal.—*PTI*

SC seeks Centre's response on PIL on palliative care

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Supreme Court sought the Centre's response on Thursday on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking a direction to authorities to provide palliative care to terminally-ill persons as part of the national health programme. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions made by senior advocate Jayna Kothari, who appeared in the court on behalf of the petitioner, that palliative care should be recognised and made part of the national health programme. The court did not agree to one of the prayers in the public interest litigation (PIL) matter filed by Bengaluru resident Rajshree Nagaraju that the right to get palliative care be declared as a part of the right to health under Article 21 (protection of life and liberty) of the Constitution.
—*PTI*

Bihar edu dept puts on hold order freezing accounts

PATNA, 7 MARCH

The Bihar government has put on hold its recent order to freeze bank accounts of state-run universities and asked authorities of the varsities to attend a review meeting convened by the education department on 9 March. The direction comes amid the ongoing standoff between the education department and the Raj Bhavan. The state government had previously ordered the freezing of the bank accounts of all state universities, barring one, and withheld the salaries of the vice-chancellors for allegedly being absent at an education department meeting last month.
—*PTI*

This February was warmest ever on record: EU Climate

Each month since last June has been the warmest such month on record

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

C3S last month said the global mean temperature breached the 1.5-degree Celsius PHOTO: PTI

- The average global sea surface temperature (SST) for February 2024 was 21.06 degrees Celsius, the highest for any month in the dataset

The world last month experienced the warmest February on record, with the average temperature being 1.77 degrees Celsius more than the February average for 1850-1900, the designated pre-industrial reference period, the European Union's climate agency said on Thursday.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) also said that every month since June last year has been the warmest such month on record.

Scientists attribute the exceptional warming to the combined effects of El Nino -- a period of abnormal warming of surface waters in the central Pacific Ocean -- and human-caused climate change.

C3S last month said the global mean temperature breached the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold for an entire year for the first time in January.

A permanent breach of the 1.5-degree Celsius limit specified in the Paris Agreement, however, refers to long-term warming over many years.

According to climate scientists, countries need to limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Earth's global surface temperature has already increased by around 1.1 degrees Celsius compared with the average in 1850–1900 — a level that has not been witnessed since 1,25,000 years, before the most recent ice age.

This warming is considered the reason behind record droughts, wildfires and floods worldwide.

With an average temperature of 13.54 degrees Celsius, February 2024 was 0.12 degrees Celsius warmer than the previous warmest February in 2016, the EU's climate agency said.

The global average temperature for the last 12 months (March 2023–February 2024) is the highest on record, at 0.68 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average and 1.56 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average.

The daily global average temperature was exceptionally high during the first half of the month, reaching 2 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 levels on four consecutive days (February 8–11 February), C3S scientists said.

The average global sea surface temperature (SST) for February 2024 was 21.06 degrees Celsius, the highest for any month in the dataset. The previous high was in August 2023 (20.98 degrees Celsius).C3S director Carlo Buontempo said, "February joins the long streak of records of the last few months. As remarkable as this might appear, it is not really surprising as the continuous warming of the climate system inevitably leads to new temperature extremes. —*PTI*

AT GULF OF ADEN

Navy rescues 21 members of drone-hit vessel

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

- The crew members had abandoned bulk carrier MV True Confidence after it caught fire following the attack on Wednesday

Indian warship INS Kolkata has rescued 21 crew members, including one Indian national after their Barbados-flagged cargo vessel was hit by a missile in the Gulf of Aden, a Navy spokesperson said on Thursday.

The crew members had abandoned bulk carrier MV True Confidence after it caught fire following the attack on Wednesday.

INS Kolkata, deployed for maritime security operations in Gulf of Aden, arrived at the scene of action at 4.45pm and rescued 21 crew members, including one Indian national, from a life raft using its integral helicopter and boats, Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said.

Critical medical aid was provided to the injured crew by the ship's medical team, he said.

The rescued crew, including the critically injured personnel, have been evacuated to Djibouti by INS Kolkata.

Indian Navy warship swiftly responded to the maritime incident in Gulf of Aden, Madhwal said.

The Barbados-flagged vessel was reportedly hit by a drone approximately 55 nm southwest of Aden resulting in the fire on board and critical injuries to some of the crew members forcing the crew to abandon the ship, he said.

The fresh incident came amid increasing global concerns over attacks on various commercial vessels in the Red Sea by Houthi militants.

In the last few weeks, Indian Navy has extended assistance to several merchant vessels in Western Indian Ocean following attacks on them.
—*PTI*

MASS CHEATING

People climb on walls of a school to pass chits to students during Class 10 board exams on Wednesday. This took place at Chandravati School in Tauru, Nuh district, Haryana PHOTO: X

India & Japan to make UN structure contemporary: EAM

TOKYO, 7 MARCH

EAM S Jaishankar met Japan's Liberal Democratic Party Vice President Taro Aso, in Japan on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

Asserting that India and Japan are powered central to Asia's multipolarity, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday that the two countries seek to make the UN structure more contemporary for the balance to remain in favour of freedom, transparency, and a rules-based order.

Jaishankar, who is in Tokyo for the second leg of his four-day visit to South Korea and Japan, also said that the world will watch how the two nations support each other in the shared goal through various relationships and initiatives.

Addressing the first Raisina Roundtable, Jaishankar called the United Nations the "most universal expression of global" while underlining the need for reform in the global organisation.

The UN's "reform is of paramount importance. As fellow members of the G4 grouping, India and Japan seek to make the UN structures more contemporary," he said.

Jaishankar said that India and Japan have to confront the prospect that the world is now more volatile, uncertain, unpredictable, and open-ended. He said that countries have to do that from the "national perspectives as well as from the point of view of their relationship". —*PTI*

FATHER OF RAPE VICTIM FOUND HANGING

HAMIRPUR ,7 MARCH

A week after two girls were found hanging from a tree in a field after they were allegedly gang-raped, the father of one of the victims was also found dead here, police said on Thursday.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Deeksha Sharma said, "The body of a 45-year-old man, resident of a village under the Sisolar police station area, was found hanging from a tree on Wednesday under unknown circumstances."

Hamirpur police are yet to register an FIR regarding the alleged suicide.

The deceased is the father of one of the girls who were found hanging in a village. —*PTI*

Acquittal in crime not ground for divorce: HC

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Delhi High Court has held that the mere acquittal of a person in a criminal case cannot be a ground for granting divorce and dismissed a man's plea seeking a decree of divorce in his favour, claiming that his wife committed cruelty to him.

A bench of Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Neena Bansal Krishna said the man's acquittal in a criminal case in a trial court does not wash away the cruelty committed by him of being involved with another woman during the subsistence of his marriage with his estranged wife.

According to the facts of the case, the couple got married in 1982 and had two children.

They started living separately in 1994.

The man had claimed that his wife was disrespectful and had refused to take care of him and even assaulted him physically.

He had alleged that his wife's conduct had shattered his peace of mind and he was compelled to do all the household work, including cooking and taking care of the children, and sought divorce on the ground of cruelty

However, the woman had claimed that her husband was involved in an illicit relationship with a much younger woman and when she came to know about it in 1993, differences cropped up between them.
—*PTI*

AFTER 10 LONG YEARS

It's a wonder I came out of jail alive: Ex-DU professor Saibaba

NAGPUR, 7 MARCH

Professor GN Saibaba after he was released from Nagpur Central Jail on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

Former Delhi University professor GN Saibaba, who was released from the Nagpur Central Jail on Thursday after his acquittal in an alleged Maoist links case, said it's a "wonder that he could come out alive" despite suffering the "brutal" jail life.

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday set aside the life sentence of Saibaba, noting that the prosecution had failed to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt.

"There was every chance that I would not have come out alive," Saibaba told media persons. He had earlier refused to talk to the press saying, "My health is very bad. I can't talk. I will have to first take medical treatment, and then only I will be able to speak."

The former DU professor, who depends on a wheelchair for mobility, said he changed his mind after requests from lawyers and reporters. Saibaba said he would be visiting doctors soon.Recalling his eight years of incarceration, which he described as "very rigorous and brutal", Saibaba said he had no accessibility inside the prison."I couldn't pull up, I could not move out of my wheelchair. I could not go to the toilet (on my own), I could not take a bath. It's a wonder that I came out of the prison alive today," he said, stressing that there was every chance that he could not have made it. — *PTI*

HC: Humans matter more than stray dogs

KOCHI, 7 MARCH

- Students are afraid to go to school alone for fear of being attacked by stray dogs

The life of human beings should be given preference over stray dogs, opined Kerala High Court recently. Kerala High Court also directed the state government to frame guidelines, schemes, or rules to give licenses to individuals interested in maintaining stray dogs so that dog lovers can protect the animals.

Students are afraid to go to school alone for fear of being attacked by stray dogs. The court also said that if the action is taken then dog lovers will protest.

The nuisance of stray dogs is increasing day by day.

Dog lovers should also be aware of this, the court observed.

Justice PV Kunhikrishnan stated that bonafide dog lovers, instead of writing in print and visual media should come forward to help the local government institutions to protect them.

The court issued the order on a petition filed by residents of Muzhathadam in Kannur seeking action against Rajeev Krishnan, a resident, who had been keeping stray dogs on his property.

The commission mentioned that 5,794 stray dog attacks were reported in 2019, 3951 cases in 2020, 7927 cases in 2021, 11776 cases were reported in 2022 and 6276 cases were reported up to 19 June, 2023. —*ANI*

Cops seek more time for probe in Parl breach case

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

- Cops requested Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur to grant three months for concluding investigation

Delhi Police moved a court here on Thursday seeking more time to complete its investigation in the Parliament security breach case, saying certain reports are awaited and the digital data is voluminous.

The city police requested Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur to grant three more months to it for concluding the investigation into the matter.

The judge issued a notice to jailed accused Neelam Azad, Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Lalit Jha, Amol Shinde, and Mahesh Kumawat on the application, seeking their replies by 11 March.In a major security breach on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, two persons -- Sharma and Manoranjan D -- jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during the Zero Hour on 13 December last year, released a yellow gas from canisters and shouted slogans, before being overpowered by MPs.

Around the same time, two other accused -- Shinde and Azad -- also sprayed coloured gas from canisters shouting "tanashahi nahi chalegi (dictatorship will not work outside the Parliament premises.
—*PTI*

TOURISM DEPT INITIATIVE

Goa beaches to now open co-working spaces

PANAJI, 7 MARCH

Importance is also given to spiritual tourism through concept of regenerative tourism PHOTO: PIXABAY

- The Goa tourism department wants to given other reasons also to travellers to come to the state, the official said

Co-working spaces for people visiting Goa will soon come up on the Morjim and Ashwem beaches in the coastal state, a tourism department official has said.

The Goa government wants to promote the state as a tourism destination not only for its beaches but also for other activities, state tourism secretary Sanjeev Ahuja told PTI at the ITB Berlin, the world's leading travel trade show.

The three-day event began on 5 March.

"We want to invite more tourists specially from Europe and high spending tourists from other destinations by providing them an allround experience," he said.

The Goa tourism department wants to given other reasons also to travellers to come to the state, the official said.

He said the concept of co-working spaces on the beaches has been introduced by the department led by minister Rohan Khaunte wherein the state will give nomad visa to the people who can come here, work and also enjoy the beaches.

The facilities at Morjim and Ashwem beaches are taking shape and would be ready soon, the official said.

The state government has already written to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and the External Affairs Ministry to provide nomad visa for such travellers, he said.

Speaking about regenerative tourism, Ahuja said the state government wants to involve the local people, culture, cuisine, festivals and even farmers into the tourism spectrum through this concept.

There are very few people who would know that Goa has huge temples which can be developed from the tourism perspective, he said, adding that even churches are covered under this concept.

The state tourism department has already signed an agreement with the Temple Connect (organisation dedicated to the revival and development of the temple eco-system) for this purpose, the official said.

Besides beach tourism, importance is also being given to spiritual tourism through the concept of regenerative tourism, he said.

Visitors will also be given an experience of spice and cashew plantations in the coastal state. "We want to give them an experience of having food directly from the farm," the official said.
—*PTI*

Court summons Kejri on 16 March after ED files plaint

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Delhi court on Thursday issued summons to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on a fresh complaint by Enforcement Directorate (ED) for allegedly evading its summonses in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Divya Malhotra directed Kejriwal to appear before the court on 16 March. ED filed the complaint before the court on Wednesday, seeking prosecution of Kejriwal for skipping multiple summonses issued to him in the case. The latest complaint pertains to Aam Aadmi Party national convenor not honouring summonses number 4 to 8 sent by the federal probe agency under Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), ED said. ED had earlier moved a local court seeking Kejriwal's prosecution for not attending the first three summonses issued to him in the money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy. *—PTI*

Excise scam: Court extends custody of Sisodia, Sanjay

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Delhi court on Thursday extended the judicial custody of Aam Aadmi Party leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam. Special Judge MK Nagpal extended the custody of the leaders after they were produced before the court on the expiry of their judicial remand granted earlier. ED sought their further judicial custody, saying that the case was at a crucial stage, and if released, the accused may hamper the investigation. CBI had registered the case alleging that irregularities were committed while modifying the Delhi excise policy, undue favours were extended to license holders, the license fee was waived or reduced and the L-1 license was extended without the competent authority's approval. The beneficiaries diverted "illegal" gains to the accused and made false entries to evade detection.*—PTI*

BJP leader shot dead in Jaunpur

JAUNPUR, 7 MARCH

A local BJP leader was shot dead by some people here in an area under Sikrara Police Station on Thursday. Superintendent of Police (City) Brijesh Kumar said that a member of BJP district unit, Pramod Kumar Yadav, a resident of Bodhapur, was travelling in his car when some motorcycle riders signaled to stop his car and shot at him. The incident occurred at around 10am. "The assailants fired four shots at Yadav. He was taken to hospital where doctors declared him dead," said Kumar. Superintendent of Police Ajay Pal Sharma said that the investigations into the matter are underway and the people involved in the incident will be arrested soon. *—PTI*

Former Cal HC judge Gangopadhyay joins BJP

KOLKATA, 7 MARCH

Two days after resigning as a judge in Calcutta High Court, Abhijit Gangopadhyay on Thursday joined BJP. Earlier, on Tuesday, after resigning as the high court judge, he had announced that he would be joining the saffron party. "Today, I have joined a new field. I am happy to join BJP and will work as a party soldier. Our objective is to oust the corrupt TMC regime from the state," he said after his official joining. He was given a grand welcome at BJP office in Salt Lake, as state party president Sukanta Majumdar handed him the party flag. "West Bengal's politics needs a person like Abhijit Gangopadhyay," BJP leader SuvenduAdhikari, who is also the leader of Opposition in the Assembly, said. *—PTI*

Rajnath warns China amid row: Will give befitting reply

Singh said that country's defence has been 'induced with new energy'

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The armed forces are well equipped, capable and ready to give a befitting reply if anyone casts an evil eye on India, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday against the backdrop of the nearly four-year border row with China in eastern Ladakh and concerns over Chinese military forays into the Indian Ocean.

Singh emphasised that the country's defence system has been "induced with a new energy" by the government in line with people's vision and it has resulted in India emerging as a powerful nation on the global stage with a strong and self-reliant military.

In an address at a defence summit hosted by NDTV, he also said that India's defence apparatus is today stronger than ever as the Modi government has been focusing on bolstering it with the "sentiment of Indianness".

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh lauded India's defence apparatus at a summit *PHOTO: PTI*

He termed 'perspective' as the major difference between the current and the previous dispensations, stating that the present government ardently believes in the capabilities of the people of India, while those in power earlier were somewhat sceptical about their potential. "Today, our forces possess a strong willpower due to a powerful leadership at the centre. We are working continuously towards keeping the morale of the soldiers high," Singh said.

"They are equipped, capable and ready to give a befitting reply to anyone who casts an evil eye on India," he said. The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-and-half-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

- He termed 'perspective' as the major difference between the current and the previous dispensations stating that the present government ardently believes in the capabilities of the people of India, while those in power earlier were somewhat sceptical about their potential

Singh described promoting 'Aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in defence manufacturing as the biggest change brought about by the government, saying it is giving a new shape to India's defence sector.

He also highlighted that govt is setting up of defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, reserving 75 per cent of the capital procurement budget for domestic industry and corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board among others.

"The annual defence production, which was around Rs 40,000 crore in 2014, has now crossed a record Rs 1.10 lakh crore. We have set a target to achieve Rs 50,000 crore of exports by 2028-29," he said.

Singh asserted that when it comes to technology, developing countries have two options -- innovation and imitation -- and New Delhi is laying special emphasis on making the country a technology creator rather than a follower. *—PTI*

MUFTI MOCKS MODI

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti and PM Narendra Modi *PHOTO: PTI*

Modi's Kashmir visit only with eye on polls: Mufti

SRINAGAR, 7 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kashmir is only meant to address and drum support among the BJP's core constituency in the rest of the country in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti said on Thursday, alleging that government employees were "forcibly" ferried to the venue of the prime minister's event here.

The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister alleged that government employees were "forcibly mobilised" and ferried to Modi's rally to paint a "pretty picture that all is well" post 2019,“ when the Centre abrogated the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution and bifurcated the erstwhile state into Union territories.

"Government employees are being herded at five am in sub zero temperatures into vehicles at Budgam bus stand ferrying them to the Prime Minister's rally.

"Disheartening to see employees being forcibly mobilised to paint a pretty picture that all is well post 2019 and that people here are celebrating their own collective disempowerment and humiliation," Mufti said in a post on X.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) president said the scene "stands contrary" to earlier visits by previous prime ministers like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh at the peak of insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir, when common people thronged to the venues of their events with great enthusiasm and returned with a hope in their hearts.

" This visit is only meant to address and drum support amongst BJP's core constituency in the rest of India for the upcoming Parliament elections," she said. *—PTI*

Tripura LoP Animesh resigns; joins hands with BJP govt

AGARTALA, 7 MARCH

Senior Tipra Motha leader Animesh Debbarma on Thursday resigned as Leader of the Opposition in Tripura Assembly.

He, along with another MLA of the party, BrishaketuDebbarma, will take oath as ministers in BJP-led government in the north-eastern state during the day."TipraMotha has 13 MLAs in the 60-member assembly. It will join the government as an ally of BJP and will be allotted two ministerial berths," Animesh Debbarma said.

The development comes days after a tripartite agreement for amicably resolving all issues of the indigenous people of Tripura was signed in New Delhi between TipraMotha, Tripura government, and Centre.

Senior Tipra Motha leader Animesh Debbarma *PHOTO: PTI*

Currently, there are nine ministers in Tripura, including Chief Minister Manik Saha. According to the rules, the state can have 12 ministers including Chief Minister. TipraMotha Chief Pradyot Debbarma, who is now camping out of the state, would fly back to attend the swearing-in ceremony.

The tripartite agreement signed on 2 February in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah agreed to amicably resolve all issues of the indigenous people of Tripura related to history, land, political rights, economic development, identity, culture, and language, according to an official statement. *—PTI*

Sena Vs Sena: SC to hear plea on 8 April

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Supreme Court on Thursday summoned original records about the plea of Uddhav Thackeray group seeking disqualification of MLAs, including Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, from the office of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar.

The speaker had, in an order on 10 January, declared Shiv Sena bloc led by Shinde as the "real political party" after its split in June 2022. He had also rejected Thackeray faction's plea to disqualify 16 MLAs of the ruling camp, including Shinde.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra sent for the original documents after the Shinde faction alleged forgery in the records by Thackeray camp.The top court, which had issued notice on the Thackeray group's petition, asked Shinde and his MLAs to file a response positively on or before 1 April, and listed the plea for final hearing on 8 April.

Thackeray faction, in its petition filed through MLA Sunil Prabhu, has alleged that Shinde "unconstitutionally usurped power" and is heading an "unconstitutional government". Shinde group had the support of 37 out of the total 54 Sena MLAs when the party split in June 2022. *—PTI*

Cong promises right to employment, for youth ahead of LS polls

JAIPUR, 7 MARCH

Congress on Thursday promised the right to employment as well as apprenticeships for youths in a series of assurances made by its leader Rahul Gandhi at a rally in Rajasthan's Banswara.

If the party is voted power in Lok Sabha elections, 30 lakh vacant government posts will be filled and a law will be enacted to curb government recruitment examination question paper leaks, he said addressing a gathering during his Bharat JodoNyayYatra.

Gandhi also promised a legal guarantee on minimum support price for crops to farmers, social security for gig workers, and Rs 5,000 crore fund for startups.

Every young diploma and degree holder in the country will have the right to apprenticeships in the private and government sectors, he said.

They will get a one-year apprenticeship during which they will be paid Rs 1 lakh, Rahul said.

Targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gandhi said, "There are 30 lakh government vacancies in India. Modi ji doesn't get them filled. BJP doesn't fill them. After coming to power, our first step will be to fill these posts."

Referring to the issue of paper leaks, he assured that Congress would standardise the government recruitment exam process and stop its outsourcing. Bharat JodoNyayYatra entered Rajasthan in Banswara from Madhya Pradesh. *—PTI*

Abhishek's wife's case: SC junks ED plea against media curbs

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to entertain a plea moved by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) challenging a Calcutta High Court order, in which guidelines were issued to probe agencies for not disclosing to the public or media, before the filing of a chargesheet, the details of a probe related to any person, an accused, a suspect or witness insofar as Rujira Banerjee is concerned.

The High Court order had come on a plea moved by Rujira Banerjee, the wife of Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Abhishek Banerjee, in which she has alleged that central probe agencies and the media are indulging in her character assassination and maligning her family by regularly publishing information regarding the probe being carried out by the agencies, including the ED, regarding alleged financial and other scams.

The High Court order had come on a plea moved by Rujira Banerjee, wife of TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee *PHOTO: PTI*

A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and Prashant Kumar Mishra told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, who appeared in the matter on behalf of the ED, that since the agency's plea is against an interim order of the high court, the top court is not inclined to entertain it.

Raju contended that it is virtually a final order as guidelines have been issued and ultimate relief has been granted to Banerjee by the interim order.

The bench told Raju that the court would either dismiss the ED's plea or the agency can withdraw it as it is against an interim order of the High Court. *—PTI*

ED raids SP MLA's premises in Kanpur

LUCKNOW, 7 MARCH

Enforcement Directorate on Thursday conducted searches at the premises of Samajwadi Party MLA Irfan Solanki and his family members in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, as part of a money laundering investigation, official sources said.

Solanki, 44, is currently lodged in Maharajganj prison and is a four-time MLA from Sisamau assembly seat.

About five premises of Solanki, his jailed brother Rizwan, Shaukat Ali, HaziWasi, NooriShaukat, and some others in Kanpur and premises in Mumbai in Maharashtra were raided early morning. *—PTI*

TMC navigating old versus new debate to prepare candidate list

KOLKATA, 7 MARCH

The TMC's candidate selection for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls is expected to prioritise the nominee's winnability, public image and sitting MPs' performance, while also reflecting the internal debate on whether experienced leaders should make way for the younger generation.

According to TMC sources, the party is likely to retain its sitting MPs for Ghatal, Asansol and Krishnanagar seats.

While actor Dev (Deepak Adhikari) is the incumbent MP of Ghatal, Shatrughan Sinha and Mahua Moitra (recently expelled from the Lok Sabha over a cash-for-query imbroglio) are parliamentarians from Asansol and Krishnanagar respectively.

Significant changes are also planned for nine previously won seats and almost all the 18 constituencies

Shatrughan Sinha *PHOTO: PTI*

that the party failed to win in 2019. The ongoing debate within the TMC between the old guard and the new generation is also likely to play a significant role in candidate selection, alongside concerns over the performance of some MPs.

Corruption allegations have made public images of leaders a significant criterion in candidate selection, besides electability.

The party is also likely to announce a significant number of women candidates, maintaining consistency with Mamata Banerjee's policy of offering representation to women leaders.

With the Sandeshkhali developments, where women accusing local TMC leaders of land-grab and sexual harassment charges have put the party in a tight spot, and Banerjee fiercely competing with the BJP for securing the loyalty of women voters, a high percentage of women candidates in the Trinamool fray is itself going to be a statement from the supremo, sources in the party said. *—PTI*

AHEAD OF WOMEN'S DAY

After PM, now didi meets Sandeshkhali women

KOLKATA, 7 MARCH

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday received wholehearted support from a group of women from the troubled Sandeshkhali area who met her after a TMC rally.

Ahead of Lok Sabha elections, Banerjee led a rally in Kolkata for women's rights. The rally, themed 'Mahila Der Adhikaar, AamaderAngikaar' (women's rights are our commitment), was organised by TMC a day ahead of International Women's Day.

During the rally, Banerjee took a group photo with the women from Sandeshkhali, who claimed that Opposition BJP and other parties were attempting to portray the ruling party in a negative light by highlighting isolated incidents of violence.The women expressed their unwavering support to the ruling party and endorsed Banerjee's stance against those accused of wrongdoing and atrocities in past years, she said.

Ahead of Lok Sabha elections,Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee led a rally in Kolkata for women's rights *PHOTO: X*

TMC rally was attended by over 200 women from the restive Sandeshkhali.

This interaction between Banerjee and Sandeshkhali women came after a similar meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and another group of women from the same area in Barasat on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Banerjee on Thursday accused BJP of spreading canards about incidents at Sandeshkhali while asserting that the state is the safest place in the country for women.

Banerjee hit out at Modi for "lecturing" West Bengal government on women's security, alleging that he keeps silent when women are tortured in BJP-ruled states.Addressing people after leading a rally in Kolkata for women's rights, she said, “Many have given fake sandesh (message) onSandeshkhali. The way a few incidents were shown is reprehensible. Some incidents may have happened and they have not reached us. But when we get to know something, we take action. I don’t hesitate to arrest TMC workers if they are at fault. *—PTI*

BJP women leaders stopped on way to Sandeshkhali, detained

KOLKATA, 7 MARCH

BJP women leaders led by party state general secretaries Agnimitra Paul and Locket Chatterjee were stopped by the West Bengal Police at New Town on the outskirts of Kolkata from heading towards Sandeshkhali on Thursday afternoon. Following a scuffle and a bitter war of words with the police, the team was detained even as the leaders were seen holding a sit-in demonstration at the site they were stopped. The leaders alleged they were being prevented from heading towards the trouble-torn area on grounds that the prohibitory section of 144 of CrPC remained clamped in certain parts of Sandeshkhali.Paul, the Asansol South MLA, said that the team only intended to visit areas in Sandeshkhali which remained outside the ambit of the prohibitory section. "Is section 144 imposed in Kolkata? On what grounds can the police stop our movement here?", she asked. *—PTI*

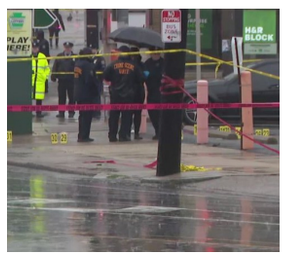


PHOTO: X/ FOX5NY

8 teens injured in Philadelphia bus stop shooting

PHILADELPHIA, 7 MARCH

Police say eight Philadelphia high school students waiting to board a city bus after classes Wednesday were wounded by gunshots from suspects who jumped from a car and opened fire, the fourth shooting on the transit system in as many days. The previous three shootings each involved a fatality. Those wounded at the bus stop included a 16-year-old who was hit nine times and was in critical condition, Kevin Bethel, the city's police commissioner, said at a news conference. Police said later that a second victim was also in critical condition. The others were said to be in stable condition. Bethel said the Northeast High School students, ranging in age from 15 to 17, were waiting for the bus around 3 pm when three people emerged from the car, and fired more than 30 shots. *—AP*

Mexico's drug cartels make it dangerous for police

CELAYA, 7 MARCH

A dead man lay on his back in the parking lot of a convenience store in late February when journalists rolled in to the north-central Mexico city of Celaya to interview police. A spray of bullet casings and spent projectiles lay around the corpse, a sight all too common in Guanajuato state, which has Mexico's highest number of homicides. A policeman had been driving his wife to work on Feb. 28 when cartel gunmen — who had apparently followed from them home — opened fire on their car. The policeman killed one attacker before dying. His wife and 1-year-old daughter were unharmed. But a week earlier, cartel gunmen shot a police officer to death while she took her 8-year-old daughter to school. *—AP*

Man who killed 18 in Maine had brain injuries: Report

AUGUSTA, 7 MARCH

Robert Card, an Army reservist who shot and killed 18 people in Maine last year, had significant evidence of traumatic brain injuries, according to a brain tissue analysis by researchers from Boston University that was released Wednesday. There was degeneration in the nerve fibres that allow for communication between different areas of the brain, inflammation and small blood vessel injury, according to Dr Ann McKee of Boston University's Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy Centre. Card had been an instructor at an Army hand grenade training range, where it is believed he was exposed to thousands of low-level blasts. "While I cannot say with certainty that these pathological findings underlie Card's behavioural changes in the last 10 months of life, based on our previous work, brain injury likely played a role in his symptoms," McKee said.*—AP*

Eastern Ukraine residents brace for Russian advance

In February, Russia captured the strategic town of Avdiivka

KYIV, 7 MARCH

In eastern Ukraine, the tide of this war hasn't just changed - it's coming in fast.

"We know what's coming," says Mariya as she packs up the TV in her flat in Kostyantynivka. She's having it delivered to Kyiv before making the journey there with her son. "We're tired all day [and suffer] moods and panic attacks. It's constantly depressing, and we're scared."

In February, Russia captured the strategic town of Avdiivka. Since then, the invaders have advanced further west, and taken several villages. Ukraine says its forces are "holding on". But Russian troops are now attacking in five areas along the 1,100km front line.

Over 1.2 million people - or two thirds of the population - have left the Ukrainian-controlled Donetsk region since Russia's full scale invasion two years ago. And it's here in the eastern Donetsk region that Ukraine's defenders are being tested the most.

Russian troops are now attacking in five areas along the 1,100km front line PHOTO: PTI

People in cities like Pokrovsk, Kostyantynivka and Kramatorsk are now facing a fast-approaching front line, and even occupation. Mariya and her mother Tetyana are finding life increasingly difficult as the Russians advance closer.

Their city is littered with signs of the approaching threat 30km (19 miles) away. Almost every street has a damaged building. Workers replace gold panels on a church after they were blown off by a missile strike on the neighbouring train station, now destroyed.

Anxiety fills the cold air in this town, once part of the industrial heartland of the former Soviet Union. Russia slowly destroys Ukraine's cities as it tries to take them. That's what is feared the most here.

Mariya explains that her mother Tetyana is staying, but she's confident she'll follow her eventually. "I've already left twice, what's the point?" says a defiant Tetyana from her apartment around the corner. She gives us slippers to

- Almost every street has a damaged building. Workers replace gold panels on a church after they were blown off by a missile strike on the neighbouring train station, now destroyed

wear around her home, which explains why it's spotless. "It's scary everywhere. The whole country is on fire."

Russia is using its size, air superiority and deeper ammunition reserves to keep pushing, at a time when Western military aid to Ukraine is running low or being held up by domestic politics. Nearby lies a wide valley with several reservoirs. It's this natural landscape which Ukraine says will allow its forces to "stabilise" the front line.

Perhaps after chaotic withdrawals in the past, Ukrainian generals are willing to temporarily concede territory in the hope it can be liberated in the long term.

—BBC News

RED-SEA CRISIS

Yemen's Houthi attack kills 3 crew members

The Houthis have launched attacks since November PHOTO: PTI

DUBAI, 7 MARCH

A missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels on a commercial ship in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday killed three of its crew members and forced survivors to abandon the vessel, the US military said.

It was the first fatal strike in a campaign of assaults by the Iranian-backed group over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The attack on the Barbados-flagged, Liberian-owned bulk carrier True Confidence further escalates the conflict on a crucial maritime route linking Asia and the Middle East to Europe that has disrupted global shipping. The Houthis have launched attacks since November, and the US began an airstrike campaign in January that so far hasn't halted their attacks.

Meanwhile, Iran announced Wednesday that it would confiscate a USD 50 million cargo of Kuwaiti crude oil for American energy firm Chevron Corp. aboard a tanker it seized nearly a year earlier. It is the latest twist in a yearslong shadow war playing out in the Middle East's waterways even before the Houthi attacks began.

The US military's Central Command said an anti-ship ballistic missile launched from a Houthi-controlled area in Yemen struck the True Confidence, causing significant damage to the ship. In addition to the three deaths, at least four crew members were wounded, with three in critical condition.

Two aerial photos released by the US military showed the the ship's bridge and cargo on board ablaze. "These reckless attacks by the Houthis have disrupted global trade and taken the lives of international seafarers simply doing their jobs, which are some of the hardest jobs in the world, and the ones relied on by the global public for sustainment of supply chains," Central Command said. *—AP*

Chinese foreign minister criticised the Biden administration for adding more Chinese companies to its lists PHOTO: PTI

US is suppressing China's rise: FM

BEIJING, 7 MARCH

China's foreign minister accused the US on Thursday of devising tactics to suppress China's rise and criticised the Biden administration for adding more Chinese companies to its sanctions lists.

Wang Yi, speaking to media during the annual meeting of China's legislature, said China's relations with the US have improved since Presidents Xi Jinping and Joe Biden met in November, but America has not fulfilled its promises.

"If the US always says one thing and does another, where is its credibility as a major power? If the US gets nervous and anxious when it hears the word China,' where is its confidence as a major power?" he said. "If the US is obsessed with suppressing China, it will eventually harm itself."

Wang also demanded that members of the UN Security Council stop blocking Palestine from becoming a member of the United Nations.

The veteran diplomat, who has earned Xi's trust, returned to the foreign minister's post last summer after his successor, Qin Gang, was abruptly dismissed without explanation after a half year on the job. Wang is also the ruling Communist Party's top foreign affairs official, a more senior position that he moved to when Qin became foreign minister at the end of 2022.

Analysts had speculated the Communist Party might use the weeklong meeting of the National People's Congress to name a new foreign minister, but that appeared off the table after an agenda released on the eve of the opening session did not include personnel changes. China's UN ambassador, Zhang Jun, said during a Security Council debate in January that China supports Palestine becoming a full member as soon as possible, as a first step toward creating a Palestinian state, according to Chinese media reports.

Wang called Thursday for a major international conference to draw up a roadmap and timetable for a two-state solution. "We support Palestine becoming a full member of the United Nations and call on individual members of the Security Council not to set obstacles for this any more," he said. He accused the United States, without mentioning it by name, of stirring up trouble in Taiwan and the South China Sea. *—AP*

Trump challenges Biden to TV debates 'anytime'

WASHINGTON, 7 MARCH

Former US president Donald Trump has challenged Joe Biden to TV debates, as the rivals hurtle towards a White House rematch following their sweep of the Super Tuesday votes.

The Republican said he would take part in a TV forum with the Democratic president "anytime, anywhere, anyplace" posting online in all capital letters. Biden's campaign said Trump was "thirsty for attention and struggling to expand his appeal". No debates have so far been agreed ahead of November's election.

Trump's challenge came hours after his last Republican rival, Nikki Haley, dropped out of the race to be the Republican nominee for the White House.

"It is important, for the Good of our Country, that

Donald Trump and Joe Biden PHOTO: PTI

Joe Biden and I Debate Issues that are so vital to America, and the American People," Trump posted on his social media website, Truth Social, hours after Haley's departure from the race.

He added that such debates could be run by the Democratic National Committee, or the Commission on Presidential Debates, which has overseen presidential debates for the last 30 years. Trump said the debate commission - which declares itself non-partisan, but is accused by conservatives of bias - was a "subsidiary" of the Democratic party.

The White House press secretary was asked earlier on Wednesday whether refusing a debate could cast doubt on Mr Biden's "acuity". She suggested the reporter speak to the president's re-election campaign.

The Biden campaign did not say whether he would participate in a debate against Mr Trump, and instead suggested that the Republican tune in to the president's Thursday evening State of the Union address to US Congress.

—BBC News

Malaysia seeks US, China cooperation in Asia-Pacific

MELBOURNE, 7 MARCH

Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said Thursday that the United States has become more "transactional", using rewards and punishments to achieve aims with other countries, and should be encouraged to enhance cooperation with China in the Asia-Pacific region.

Anwar advocated against taking sides in US-led Western rivalries against China for strategic influence in the region. He also rejected Western criticism that Malaysia is too accommodating of China as it becomes increasingly assertive in the South China Sea.

Anwar, in a speech at Australian National University on Thursday, promoted "empathy" toward China, which he said regarded negative reactions to its rise as an "attempt to deny their legitimate place in history". *—AP*

ISRAEL ARREST 250 TERRORISTS HOLED UP IN RESIDENTIAL TOWERS

TEL AVIV, 7 MARCH

Israeli soldiers in Khan Yunis apprehended 250 Palestinian terrorists in Khan Yunis, the Israel Defence Forces said on Wednesday. Members of the IDF's Commando Brigade working with the elite Shayetet 13 unit raided terror infrastructure in the city's Hamad Towers district. The soldiers apprehended many terrorists who surrendered, including a Hamas sniper cell commander and two Hamas squad commanders. In addition, the soldiers seized large amounts of weapons, including Kalashnikov rifles, grenades, vests, RPGs, explosives, ammunition, explosive kits, and closed-circuit diving systems intended for military and terrorist use. Other terrorists affiliated with Palestinian Islamic Jihad were also arrested. In recent days, Israeli forces evacuating residents from the towers nabbed dozens of terrorists trying to flee among the civilians. Some of the terrorists apprehended participated in the October 7 massacre, and some are terrorists from Hamas's elite Nukhba force. The IDF said many are already being interrogated. The Hamad Towers is a residential area of 40 towers built with Qatari funding following the Gaza War of 2012 and inaugurated in 2016. *—ANI*

8.5K migrants died last year: UN

UNITED NATION, 7 MARCH

A total of 8,565 migrants died on land and sea routes worldwide last year, the UN migration agency said Wednesday, a record high since it began tallying deaths a decade ago. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said the biggest increase in deaths last year was on the treacherous Medi terranean Sea crossing, to 3,129 from 2,411 in 2022. However, that was well below the record 5,136 deaths recorded on the Mediterranean in 2016 as huge numbers of Syrians, Afghans and others fled conflicts toward Europe.

It said most of the deaths last year, about 3,700, came from drowning PHOTO: ANADOLU AGENCY

IOM said the total number of deaths among migrants in 2023 was nearly 20 per cent more than in 2022. It said most of the deaths last year, about 3,700, came from drowning. *—AP*

FUKUSHIMA DISASTER CLEANUP

Japan is still struggling, says Expert

TOKYO, 7 MARCH

As Japan prepares to mark the 13th anniversary of its worst-ever nuclear disaster, the man in charge of cleaning it up says his team is fighting to bring a sample out of the heart of the site's radioactive debris.

A decades-long project to clean up the remains of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant is preparing to remove damaged fuel debris from the plant's reactors, but much about what's inside them is still a mystery.

The key to unlocking that mystery — and figuring out how to clean it up — is a sample of melted fuel from inside a reactor, said Akira Ono, head of decommissioning for Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (tepco), in an interview with Associated Press.

A magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami in 2011, damaged the Fukushima Daiichi plant's cooling systems PHOTO: CSCR

Getting that sample would be like penetrating "the main keep of the castle" in the battle of decommissioning, Ono said. "We have achieved a number of things, but we still have a lot of thinking to do to tackle the unprecedented task of removing melted fuel."

A magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami on 11 March, 2011, damaged the Fukushima Daiichi plant's cooling systems, causing three of its reactors to meltdown.

About 880 tonnes of highly radioactive melted nuclear fuel remains inside the three damaged reactors, but no one knows what condition the melted fuel is in or exactly where in the reactors it fell, said Ono. Since a 2019 robot probe first looked inside the No 2 reactor — the least damaged — TEPCO has been trying to extract a small amount of melted debris from it using a robotic arm.

That effort has been delayed for more than two years as the team works out how to get the robot past the wreckage.

Last month, the plant made its first drone flight into the worst-hit reactor, no 1 reactor, to investigate the melted debris, but had to cancel a second day of exploration after a secondary robot that helped with data transmission failed.

—PTI

10 YEARS ON

Malaysia pushes for renewed MH370 search

KUALA LUMPUR, 7 MARCH

It has been 10 years since Malaysia Airlines passenger flight MH370 disappeared on 8 March, 2014. To this day it remains one of the biggest aviation mysteries. It's unthinkable that a modern Boeing 777-200ER jetliner with 239 people on board can vanish. The Malaysian transport minister announced a renewed push for another search. The survey will be conducted by US firm Ocean Infinity.

What happened to MH370?

The flight was scheduled to fly from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. Air traffic control lost contact with the aircraft within 60 minutes into the flight over the South China Sea. Subsequently, it was tracked by military radar crossing the Malay Peninsula and was last located by radar over the Andaman Sea in the north-eastern Indian Ocean. Later, automated satellite communications indicated that the plane ended up in the southeast Indian Ocean along the 7th arc (an arc is a series of coordinates).

The Malaysian transport minister announced a renewed push for another search PHOTO: EPA

What was found?

On 18 March 2014, Australia led a search in southern Indian Ocean.

This continued until 28 April and covered 4,500,000 sqkm. No debris was found.

Two underwater searches of the Indian Ocean, 2,800km off the coast of Western Australia, have also failed.

What about debris?

Several pieces of debris have washed up in the years. In June 2015, Australian officials determined that debris might arrive in Sumatra, contrary to the ocean currents in the region. On 30 July, 2015, a large piece of debris washed up on Reunion Island in the western Indian Ocean.

Why a new search for MH370 now?

The proposed new search by Ocean Infinity has narrowed down the target area within latitudes 36°S and 33°S.

In the area where the search is to take place, the ocean is around 4,000 metres deep.

The water temperatures are 1–2°C, with low currents. This means that the debris field would be relatively intact. *—The Conversation*

Market edges higher to settle at fresh lifetime highs again

Sensex advanced 33.40 points to settle at a new peak of 74,119.39

MUMBAI, 7 MARCH

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty edged higher to close at fresh record highs on Thursday driven by gains in metal and FMCG shares amid firm global trends and foreign fund inflows. In a highly volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 33.40 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at a new peak of 74,119.39.

During the day, it jumped 159.18 points or 0.21 per cent to hit an all-time high of 74,245.17.

The broader Nifty rose by 19.50 points or 0.09 per cent to close at a record 22,493.55. During the day, it climbed 51.6 points or 0.22 per cent to an all-time high of 22,525.65.

"Equity benchmark indices edged higher after hitting a record high amid a firm trend in the US market and FII inflows," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Faster-than-expected economic growth for the current fiscal year boosted sentiments for metal and capital goods stocks, Nair said.

Among Sensex firms, Tata Steel rose the most by 3.9 per cent. JSW Steel gained 2.09 per cent, Tata Motors by 2.14 per cent, Bajaj Finserv by 2 per cent, and Bajaj Finance by 1.71 per cent. Asian Paints, ITC and Nestle were also among the major gainers. Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank and Power Grid were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.70 per cent and midcap index spurted by 0.39 per cent. Among the indices, metal jumped 1.36 per cent, capital goods climbed 1.05 per cent. Commodities (1 per cent), FMCG (0.98 per cent), telecommunication (0.98 per cent) and industrials (0.93 per cent) also advanced.

Auto, bankex, oil & gas and realty were the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul settled in the green while Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended in positive territory on Wednesday.

Analysts said that global indices exhibited mixed sentiments, driven by the Fed's signals of hope for a potential rate cut this year. Further clarity on the labour market, anticipated with the release of non-farm payroll data on Friday, will offer insights into potential rate adjustments, they added. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,766.75 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.65 per cent to USD 82.42 a barrel. The BSE benchmark jumped 408.86 points or 0.55 per cent to settle at a new record high of 74,085.99 on Wednesday. The Nifty climbed 117.75 points or 0.53 per cent to settle at a fresh closing peak of 22,474.05.

—PTI

Among Sensex firms, Tata Steel rose the most by 3.9 per cent **PHOTO: X**

Rupee jumps 10p to settle at 82.73 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 7 MARCH

Rising for the second straight session, the rupee climbed 10 paise to settle at 82.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, tracking a weak American currency against major crosses overseas and a positive trend in equity markets. Besides, foreign fund inflows and falling crude oil prices boosted the local currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the domestic unit opened slightly up at 82.82 and gained further ground to touch the intra-day peak of 82.72 against the greenback. The currency finally settled at 82.73 (provisional), up 10 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee settled 7 paise higher at 82.83 against the US dollar. AnujChoudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the Indian rupee appreciated on Thursday on weak US dollar and positive domestic markets, while FII inflows also supported the rupee. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, declined 0.13 per cent to 103.18. *—PTI*

Gold jumps Rs 500 to scale record high of Rs 65,650 per 10g

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

G Gold prices on Thursday jumped by Rs 500 to Rs 65,650 per 10g in the national capital amid a rally in precious metal's rates in international markets, according to HDFC Securities.

Maintaining its upward march for the third straight day, the precious metal touched a fresh lifetime high of Rs 65,650 per 10 grams. The yellow metal had closed at Rs 65,150 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver prices also rallied by Rs 400 to Rs 74,900 per kg. In the previous session, it closed at Rs 74,500 per kg. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,152 per ounce, up by USD 30 from the previous close. Comex spot gold reached a new high of USD 2,161.50 per ounce in Asian trading. *—PTI*

SAR Televenture plans to raise Rs 450 crore via FPO

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Telecommunication infrastructure provider SAR Televentures Ltd is looking to raise Rs 450 crore through a combination of Further Public Offer (FPO) and a rights issue to fund the company's expansion plans. The Noida-based SAR Televentures, which made its debut on NSE's Emerge platform in November 2023, is engaged in the business of installing and commissioning telecom towers in India. The composite public issue with a face value of Rs 2 consists of a further public offer of Rs 200 crore and a rights issue of Rs 250 crore, according to the draft offer documents filed last week. Proceeds from the issue, to the extent of Rs 273 crore will be used for funding the setting up of Fiber to the Home (FTTH) network solutions for 3 lakh home passes; and Rs 42.50 crore for setting up of an additional 1,000 number of 4G/5G telecom towers *—PTI*

HCLTech ties up with ServiceNow for Gen-AI problems

NOIDA, 7 MARCH

IT firm HCLTech on Thursday said it has partnered with American software company ServiceNow to offer Gen-AI-led solutions for driving efficiency and cost-savings in businesses.HCLTech will offer consulting, design, implementation, and managed services through ServiceNow's entire suite of products, HCLtech said in a statement. It said the partnership will help enterprises realise cost-savings and enhance cross-department efficiency and productivity. *—PTI*

MADE IN INDIA BOOST

Ashwini Vaishnaw said India will become the third largest economy by 2027 **PHOTO: PTI**

'Mobile exports to grow to $50bn, 25L to get jobs'

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Mobile phone exports from India will grow more than five-fold to USD 50-60 billion in the coming time from about USD 11 billion last year, Union IT and Communications Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

Speaking at a fintech event on Wednesday, he said employment in the electronics manufacturing sector will increase from about 10 lakh at present to 25 lakh in the coming days. He said that 10 years ago India imported 98 per cent of mobile phones and at present 99 per cent of the devices are made in India.

He said India will become the third largest economy by 2027 while it was ranked 11th in 2014.

A report published by Jefferies Equity Research last month said that India would become the third-largest economy by 2027 and expected to achieve a market capitalization of USD 10 trillion by 2030.

He said that when the country is in 5th spot in terms of economy it has created huge infrastructure in terms of railways, highways, airports etc.

The Minister said that the government added 5,200km of railway line last year, which is equivalent to the size of the entire Switzerland railway network.

"Already 4,972km have been completed. The entire month of March is left. We will add 5500km (railway lines) this year," Vaishnaw said.

He said airports in the country have doubled in the last 10 years. *—PTI*

CBI raids 67 locations in UCO IMPS scam

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH ,

CBI has conducted searches at 67 locations in seven cities of Rajasthan and Maharashtra in the Rs 820-crore IMPS scam in UCO bank, officials said Thursday.

The case pertains to over 8,53,049 IMPS (Immediate Payment System) transactions that took place between November 10 and November 13 last year in the bank.

"IMPS inward transactions initiated from around 14,600 account holders of seven private banks were wrongfully posted in the accounts of over 41,000 UCO Bank account holders. This resulted in Rs. 820 crore being credited to UCO Bank accounts without actual debiting from the originating banks," the CBI Spokesperson said.

The searches in Rajasthan and Maharashtra on Wednesday focused on people who received the money and withdrew it rather than returning it to the bank, officials said. This is the second round of searches. "Earlier in December 2023, searches were conducted at 13 locations involving private individuals and UCO Bank officials in Kolkata and Mangalore," the Spokesperson said.

Over 330 police personnel, including 120 from Rajasthan Police, in 40 teams and 80 independent witnesses were involved in the action spread across multiple cities including Jodhpur, Jaipur, Jalore, Nagaur, Barmer, Phalodi) and Pune (Maharashtra). *—PTI*

AIRCRAFT LEASING DISPUTE

SpiceJet, Echelon end Rs 413 cr row

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

SpiceJet on Thursday said it has settled a dispute involving Rs 413 crore with aircraft leasing firm Echelon Ireland Madison One Ltd, making it the third dispute settlement to be announced by the crisis-hit carrier in less than two weeks.

The latest settlement will result in savings of USD 48 million (Rs 398 crore), the airline said in a statement.

As part of the settlement of the Rs 413-crore dispute, SpiceJet will acquire two airframes. Generally, an airframe is an aircraft without engines.

The airline, which is facing multiple headwinds and is in the process of raising funds, is acquiring a total of three airframes through the three dispute settlements. The airframes are of Boeing 737 NG planes. "These successful settlements have resulted in total savings of Rs 685 crore for the airline," the statement said. On 5 March, the airline announced a settlement with aircraft leasing firm Cross Ocean Partners with respect to a dispute of about USD 11.2 million (Rs 93 crore). As part of the arrangement, the airline will get an airframe and an engine.Earlier, on February 28, SpiceJet said it has settled the USD 29.9-million (Rs 250 crore) dispute with Celestial Aviation.

On Thursday, shares of the airline jumped 3.52 per cent to Rs 64.10 apiece in the morning trade on the BSE. *—PTI*

On Thursday, shares of the airline jumped 3.52 per cent to Rs 64.10 **PHOTO: X/@PRIYALPODDAR**

Govt denies extension of EV subsidy FAME-II

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

The government on Thursday said it has not extended the flagship scheme to promote electric mobility FAME-II beyond 31 March, according to officials.

The Ministry of Heavy Industries denied media reports claiming that the Centre has granted a temporary four-month extension to the scheme till 31 31, with an outlay of Rs 500 crore for the period.

Subsidies under the second phase of the FAME Scheme will be eligible for e-vehicles sold till 31 March, 2024, or till the time funds are available, the Heavy Industries ministry stated last month.

It also shared that the outlay of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India (FAME-II) programme has been enhanced from Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 11,500 crore.

The Ministry had said in the statement that the second phase of its flagship scheme to promote adoption of EVs in India -- FAME II -- was "fund- and term-limited". *—PTI*

Passenger vehicle firms to grow by 9%: ICRA

KOLKATA, 7 MARCH

The domestic passenger vehicle (PV) market is estimated to grow by six to nine per cent in the current financial year over the preceding fiscal, according to ratings firm ICRA.

In absolute terms, the PV industry will clock a sales figure of 4.2 million units in the current fiscal.

The report said that dealer inventories remain high despite strong retail sales, and the pace of growth is expected to taper off in the coming financial year.

ICRA said that during the recently concluded festive season, retail sales grew six per cent year-on-year.

The inventory levels in the industry remain high at 50 to 55 days at the end of January 2024.

The utility vehicle (UV) segment continued to expand led by a shift in customer preferences coupled with a slew of product launches.

The demand for the entry car segment remained muted, the report said.

The availability of alternative fuels like CNG and electricity is steadily on the rise aided by the introduction of new models. *—PTI*

PV industry will clock a sales figure of 4.2 million units in the current fiscal **PHOTO: X**

SUZLON BAGS 72.45 MW WIND POWER PROJECT

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Renewable energy solutions provider Suzlon Group on Thursday said it has secured a 72.45 MW wind power project from Juniper Green Energy Pvt Ltd.

As part of the project, Suzlon will install 23 Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) with a Hybrid Lattice Tubular (HLT) tower and a rated capacity of 3.15 Megawatt (MW) each at the client's site at the Dwarka district in Gujarat, a company statement said.

The company will supply the wind turbines (equipment supply) and execute the project with a scope of supply, supervision, and commissioning. Additionally, Suzlon will undertake post-commissioning operation and maintenance services, according to the statement.

JP Chalasani, CEO, Suzlon Group, said, "we are delighted to announce our third order with Juniper Green Energy Private Limited in just a few months." *—PTI*

Air India deboards Religare CEO from flight

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Air India deboarded Religare Enterprises Chairperson Rashmi Saluja from a London-bound flight at the Delhi airport for rude behaviour with crew members on 5 March, sources said on Thursday.

The incident happened on flight AI 161 before the scheduled pushback for takeoff and Saluja was deboarded following advice from the captain of the flight.

One source said the passenger behaved in a rude manner with the crew members.

A query sent to Religare Enterprises seeking comments on the incident involving Saluja did not elicit an immediate response.

"Following the offboarding, flight AI 161 departed after a delay of about an hour. The passenger who was offboarded was travelling for some compelling reasons and was accommodated on a subsequent flight," Air India said.

Religare Enterprises and Dabur group promoters are involved in a corporate dispute over having a controlling stake in Religare Enterprises.

Dabur group promoters have also made certain allegations of corporate governance lapses against Saluja and Religare Enterprises. These allegations have been denied by both. *—PTI*

Rashmi Saluja was offboarded on the advice of the captain following some argument with members of the crew **PHOTO: X**

RBI, Bank Indonesia sign pact

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Bank Indonesia (BI) on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote use of local currencies for bilateral transactions.

MoU was signed here for establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies viz., the Indian Rupee (INR) and the Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) for cross-border transactions, RBI said in a statement.

This framework would enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn would enable the development of an INR-IDR foreign exchange market.

"Use of local currencies would optimise costs and settlement time for transactions," RBI said.

Reserve Bank of India and Bank Indonesia on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote use of local currencies for bilateral transactions.

MoU was signed here for establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies viz., the Indian Rupee (INR) and the Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) for cross-border transactions, RBI said. *—PTI*

Property Share offers Rs 191cr warehouse for fractional ownership

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Proptech startup Property Share has identified a premium warehousing project in Jaipur valuing Rs 191 crore and is offering the rent-yielding asset to investors for fractional ownership.

Property Share, which is a tech platform for commercial real estate investments, has launched a warehousing asset located in Jaipur on its platform.

The asset, a 9.1 per cent yielding Grade A+ warehouse, has been given on lease to Flipkart, an e-commerce player.

The asset comprises three boxes totalling 5,28,631 square feet. The rent escalates by 12.5 per cent every 3 years.

The minimum investment is Rs 25 lakh.

Kunal Moktan, Co-Founder & CEO, Property Share said, "Tier 2+ cities are some of the largest consumers of e-commerce platforms today but are significantly underserved in terms of Grade A warehousing stock." "The industry will witness high growth as quality and demand are driven by Amazon and Walmart / Flipkart," he added. *—PTI*

2 LAKH WOMEN SURVEYED

'Work-life balance obstacle in career growth for women'

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Work-life balance is the key obstacle preventing women from advancing in careers or breaking the glass ceiling, said 70 per cent of respondents in a survey conducted by learntechstartup Hero Vired.

About 77 per cent of the respondents also observed an increase in the representation of women in leadership positions compared to previous years, it said.

Hero Vired said the report 'Women in Modern Workplaces in India' is based on insights from the survey that reached out to 2 lakh women. The survey comes ahead of the International Women's Day on 8 March.

The report emphasises the challenges faced by women returning to work after a hiatus. "Factors such as feeling out of touch with technological advancements, concerns about skill degradation and difficulties in finding suitable job opportunities emerge as significant obstacles," Hero Vired said in a release.

Many believe that upskilling can help women keep pace with opportunities in the modern workplace **PHOTO: X**

Despite the desire to reacclimate and progress in their careers, these challenges often hinder women from fully leveraging their potential in the workplace, it said.

The report's findings also indicate that 59 per cent of the respondents believe women in today's workforce have equal opportunities as men, reflecting the changing dynamics towards workplace equality.

Moreover, 78 per cent of the respondents who acknowledged the benefit of having more women in leadership positions believe it contributes to promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace culture.

According to the survey, 55 per cent of the respondents also advocated that organisations should offer specialised upskilling programmes for women returning to work after a career break.

Further, 85 per cent of the respondents believe that upskilling can help women keep pace with opportunities in the modern workplace. Motivated by advancement opportunities, 65 per cent of women are inclined to invest in upskilling and career development, it added. *—PTI*

Rohit, Jaiswal pummel England after Yadav, Ashwin spin show

IPL is hugely popular, but Test cricket is life: Ashwin

DHARAMSALA, 7 MARCH

The fragility of England's batters against high-quality spin was exposed once again before India showed them how to bat on a flat track by cruising to 135 for one at stumps on day one of the fifth and final Test here on Thursday.

Opting to bat, England were all at sea against the mastery of left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav whose fourth five-wicket haul in Tests allowed India to bowl out the visitors for 218 in their first innings shortly after tea.

Playing his 100th Test, R Ashwin cleaned up the tail with four wickets while Ravindra Jadeja took one. Contrary to expectations, all 10 wickets went to the spinners at the scenic HPCA Stadium and the last seven batsmen fell while adding only 43 runs.India came out to bat in bright sunshine and Rohit Sharma (52 batting off 83 balls) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (57 off 58b) put the hosts in firm control with a 104-run stand.

India reached 135 for one in 30 overs at the close. Shubman Gill (26 off 39b) was batting alongside Rohit.It was the highest opening stand of this series for India and was broken when Jaiswal got a bit carried away to be stumped off Shoaib Bashir after collecting back-to-back boundaries.

India's bowler Kuldeep Yadav celebrates after taking five wickets during the first day of the fifth Test cricket match between India and England **PHOTO: PTI**

Ashwin receiving his special 100th Test cap from Rahul Dravid **PHOTO: PTI**

"Test cricket is the closest synergy that you can find to life." Ravichandran Ashwin's voice trembled with emotion and pride during the gratitude speech after receiving his special 100th Test cap from India head coach Rahul Dravid here on Thursday.

But Ashwin did not restrict that landmark moment, which came during the fifth and final Test against England, to himself but he championed the cause of Test cricket amidst money-spinning T20 leagues.

"IPL has been a hugely popular tournament; a lot of kids want to play T20 and get into the IPL. I do wish that they get there. But remember one thing, this format (Test)... it is in a lot of things that life wouldn't teach you," Ashwin said.

"I think Test cricket is what life is. It is the closest synergy that you can find to life. It will teach you to adapt, and deal with pressures."

India 135 for 1 (Jaiswal 57, Rohit 52*, Gill 26*) trail England 218 (Crawley 79, Kuldeep 5-72, Ashwin 4-51) by 83 runs.

—PTI

Test cap for Devdutt Padikkal **PHOTO: PTI**

Padikkal: Overcoming health complications to land a dream

BENGALURU, 7 MARCH

Devdutt Padikkal 23-year-old had to go through pain over the last two years to reach this dream moment.

Devdutt Padikkal beamed broadly while receiving his India Test cap from Ravichandran Ashwin on Thursday but the happy exterior masked the struggles the 23-year-old had to go through over the last two years to reach this dream moment.

After making his India debut in 2021 during a T20I against Sri Lanka, Devdutt's career graph did not go up as expected due to a COVID-19 infection and a stomach-related health complication.

"Those two years (2021 to early 2023), he was struggling to stay fit and healthy. He suffered from loss of weight too. It was a constant stomach bug that was troubling him," Irfan Sait, who coached Devdutt through his formative years, told PTI. "We kept talking to each other over the phone, and incidentally, I was also having the same condition and we were consulting the same doctor in the Jain Hospital without each other knowing. "Mohammed Naseerudden, another coach here, too has been close to him and kept in touch with him during those low-mood phases."

—PTI

Harmanpreet Singh's Indian team. **PHOTO: PTI**

We can beat anyone: Harmanpreet

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

As a collective force, our mindset is unwaveringly centred on our own strengths, as we believe that by harnessing our full potential, we can beat anyone.

Having clinched a bronze medal in the Tokyo Olympics, the Indian men's hockey team will look to upgrade to gold in the upcoming Paris Games, said skipper Harmanpreet Singh.

The record eight-time gold medalists had fought hard from a 1-3 deficit to beat Germany 5-4 in the bronze play-off at Tokyo in 2021, ending their 41-year wait for an Olympic medal.

Before that, India's last Olympic medal was a gold in the Moscow Games in 1980.

"Tokyo was a monumental moment, and we're determined to carry that momentum into Paris. Our goal is straightforward -- to upgrade the color of the medal by aiming for gold," Harmanpreet said in a Hockey India release, reacting to India's draw in Paris.

"Taking it one step at a time, our initial focus is on advancing through the group stage and securing a spot in the quarterfinals. With our experience and skill set, we believe we're strong contenders for a podium finish," he said.

World No. 4 India will kickstart their campaign against lower-ranked New Zealand on 27 July, and then they will face No. 7 Argentina (29 July), No. 12 Ireland (30 July), and No. 2 Belgium (1 August).

They will play their last group stage game against No. 5 Australians on 2 August.

Expressing his thoughts on the fixtures, Harmanpreet conveyed his enthusiasm and determination: "Competing in Pool B is going to be challenging, given the undeniable potential of every team to emerge victorious on any given day. "But we stand steadfast, mentally and physically prepared for every challenge that paves our journey at the Paris Olympics. *—PTI*

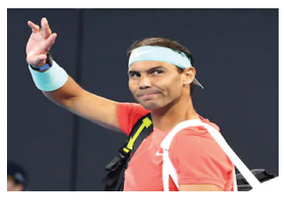


PHOTO: PTI

Nadal withdraws from ATP Indian Wells comeback

PARIS, 7 MARCH

Rafael Nadal abandoned his planned ATP Tour comeback at the Indian Wells Masters on Wednesday, saying he was not ready for the demands of tournament tennis on the eve of his opening match in California. The Spanish icon's bombshell decision came four days after the 37-year-old lost a Las Vegas exhibition to compatriot and world number two Carlos Alcaraz. Nadal missed almost all of the 2023 season with abdominal and other injuries and has played only the Brisbane International this season, where he suffered a flare-up of a hip injury.The 22-time Grand Slam champion had been due to open at Indian Wells on Thursday against Canada's former Wimbledon finalist Milos Raonic."It is with great sadness that I have to withdraw from this amazing tournament.*—AP*

Natalie Sciver-Brunt against UP Warriorz in the WPL 2024 game **PHOTO: PTI**

MI crush UPW by 42 runs to exact sweet revenge

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Mumbai Indians exacted sweet revenge on UP Warriorz, defeating them by 42 runs to climb to the second spot in the standings of the Women's Premier League here on Thursday.

Opting to bat, MI overcame early jitters to post a decent 160/6.While Nat Sciver-Brunt (45 off 31) and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (33 off 30) added 59 off 46 balls for the third wicket to steady MI's ship, the innings got impetus due to Amelia Kerr (39 not out off 23 balls) and rising star Sajeevan Sajana's (22 not out off 14 balls) knocks. The duo added 43 in 4.2 overs towards the end.UPW struggled in their chase, finding runs difficult to come by as they could manage 118 for nine.The win was a sweet revenge for MI who lost by seven wickets against UPW on February 28 in Bengaluru.

UPW's problems compounded when they lost three key wickets -- skipper Alyssa Healy, Kiran Navgire, and Chamari Athapaththu inside the first five overs for just 15 runs.

UPW never really recovered from the torrid start as the asking rate kept on climbing with every over. The likes of Grace Harris (15) and Deepti Sharma (53 not out) too found the going tough.

Even though Deepti opened up towards the end, by then the match was out of UPW's grasp. UPW's struggle can be gauged from the fact that only three batters Harris, Deepti, and Shweta Sehrawat (17) managed double-digit scores.

Saika Ishaque (3/37) and Nat Sciver-Brunt (2/14) were the main wicket-takers for MI.Earlier, MI did not have the best of starts after opting to bat as they lost both the openers Yastika Bhatia and Hayley Mathews inside the fourth over.

Both the batters were dismissed by Athapaththu as they looked to go big against the Sri Lankan off-spinner.While Sciver-Brunt played her shots during her aggressive knock. *—PTI*

Sindhu produced another impressive show **PHOTO: PTI**

Sindhu enters quarterfinals, Srikanth loses in French Open

PARIS, 7 FEB

India's PV Sindhu produced another impressive show as she rallied to a three-game win over USA's Beiwen Zhang to advance to the women's singles quarterfinals but it was curtains for Kidambi Srikanth at the French Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Thursday.

Playing her first BWF tour event since returning from a knee injury, Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, battled her way from an opening-game reversal to outgun World No. 10 Zhang 13-21 21-10 21-14 to enter her first quarterfinal of the season.

The world No. 11 will face either Olympic champion and second seed Chen Yu Fei of China or Denmark's Line Christophersen, making the contest an acid test for the Indian. *—AP*

Gukesh beats Keymer, Praggu draws with Bartel in Prague

PRAGUE, 7 MARCH

Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh defeated Vincent Keymer of Germany, but his compatriot R Praggnanandhaa was held to a draw by Mateusz Bartel of Poland in the eighth and penultimate round of the Prague Masters Chess tournament here on Thursday.

Uzbek Grandmaster Nodirbek Abdusattarov's winning run continued as he crashed through the defenses of Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran to win the title with one round remaining.

With six points in his bag now, Abdusattarov has an unassailable 1.5-point lead. The Uzbek also climbed up to the fourth spot in the world ranking following his stupendous show here.

D Gukesh **PHOTO: PTI**

The other Indian in the fray -- Vidit Gujrathi also played out a draw with Richard Rapport of Romania. With just one round remaining, Maghssodloo, Praggna nandhaa, and Nguyen Thai Dai Van of the Czech Republic share the second spot on 4.5 points apiece.

Local star David Navara, Rapport, and Gukesh are on 50 percent score with four points, a full point ahead of Keymer and Bartel. Gujrathi, on 2.5 points, is at the bottom of the table. Gukesh was aggressive right from the beginning of a Nimzo Indian defense game with white. Keymer was pushed to the wall in the middle game with a wrong pawn capture and what followed was a string of white pieces gunning down the black king. *—AP*

PHOTO: IANS

Karthik to end IPL career after the 2024 edition

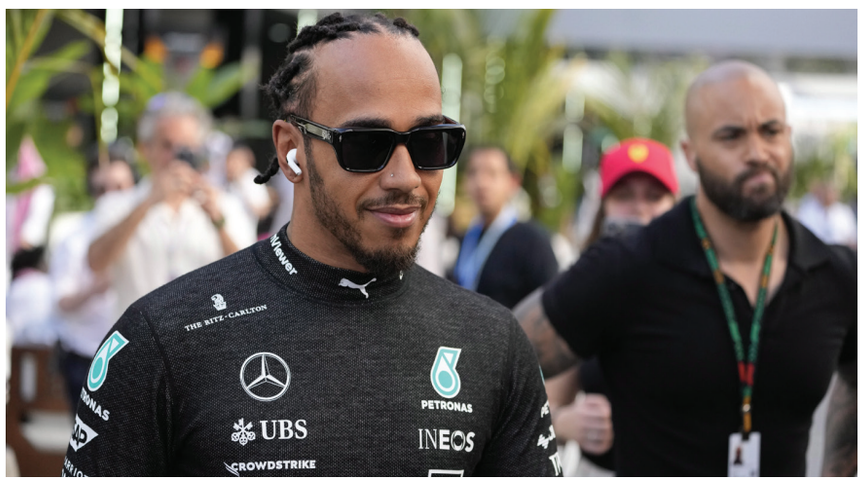
DHARAMSALA, 7 MARCH

India wicketkeeper batter Dinesh Karthik is all set to make his last IPL appearance in the 2024 edition beginning on March 22, and he will decide on his international retirement after the lucrative T20 league.The 38-year-old, who is currently contracted with the Royal Challengers Bangalore, has played in all 16 editions of the IPL since 2008 and has only missed two matches across 16 seasons."This 2024 edition will be his (Dinesh Karthik's) last IPL. He will decide his international retirement after the IPL."*—PTI*

Sindhu named ambassador for Earth Hour India

NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH

Two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu has been named the goodwill ambassador for this year's 'Earth Hour India', an 18-year-old movement that seeks to raise awareness for environmental issues. Earth Day will be celebrated on 23 March."I am joining WWF-India's Earth Hour by making strides towards a more sustainable lifestyle and spending more time in nature," Sindhu said in a statement."I am giving an hour for Earth by stepping out of the gym and working out in nature once a week. *—PTI*



Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain prepares for the first practice session ahead of the Formula One Saudi Arabian Grand Prix at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

TEEN SHOOTER ACCIDENTALLY FIRES AT PHYSIO

NEW DELHI, 7 MAR

Accidental firing by a teenage shooter left a physiotherapist with a broken jaw that required emergency surgery to dislodge the pellet during a tournament in Chennai, making it the third serious breach of safety norms in an Indian shooting this year.After a shooter lost his thumb while filling the cylinder of his pistol in Faridabad recently and a rifle exponent pointed her gun toward the spectator's gallery during the Nationals here, a shooter from Bengal accidentally shot a physiotherapist in her hotel room in Chennai early this year.The pellet got lodged in the physio's jaw and was removed after an emergency surgery at a private hospital."It was accidental. The shooter was cleaning her gun and the physio suddenly appeared there. It is the fault of the shooter, I would say. She should have been more careful. But it was an accidental case and happened at night," Bengal coach Koeli Mitter, who was with the team, told PTI."I guess she (physio) is doing fine and we had taken her to the hospital at that moment only and surgery was performed on the jaw. She was in daycare for 24 hours," she added. *—PTI*

No wrestling trials under Singh: Sakshi

NEW DELHI, 1 FEB

Olympic bronze medallist Sakshi Malik on Thursday said that the Delhi High Court has ordered Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Sanjay Singh that he will not to hold any national trials.

Speaking exclusively to IANS, Sakshi said that the court has provided some good news for the protesting wrestlers. *—PTI*

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTER-FINALS

Man City and Erling Haaland reach new landmarks

DUBAI, 7 MARCH

Manchester City moved into the quarter-finals with a comfortable and easy 3-1 victory over FC Copenhagen at the Etihad Stadium.

Goal number 41 in the Champions League for Haaland arrived just before half-time and, with it, the 23-year-old drew level in the competition with the record of Manchester City goalscoring legend Sergio Aguero. Except he has done it in just 37 appearances – 42 fewer than Aguero.

Any nerves were settled in the opening minutes as Manuel Akanji met a Julian Alvarez corner to volley home the opening goal and it wasn't long before the second goal went in.

Alvarez took control of a clearance out of the box before fizzling a ball back into the middle and seeing Kamil Grabara fumble the ball over the line.

Copenhagen threatened to mount a comeback after a fine finish from Mohamed Elyounssi after the visitors broke up the pitch but Erling Haaland's strike before half-time secured a spot in the next round.

For Manchester City, the Champions League tends to start in earnest in the quarter-finals these days. The defending champions cruised through to the last eight for a seventh successive season. Now, finally, it gets tougher. City's propensity to win weak groups and draw one of the lesser lights in the last 16 can delay the meaningful contests. FC Copenhagen were brushed aside, as they were always going to be, while Pep Guardiola granted nearly all of his strongest side some kind of rest before the visit to Liverpool. For City, the Premier League, like the Champions League. The phoney wars are ending.

Erling Haaland celebrates scoring his 41st goal in the Champions League to match Sergio Agüero's tally in the competition **PHOTO: AFP**

Real Madrid scraped through into the Champions League quarter-finals with a 1-1 second-leg draw draw against RB Leipzig **PHOTO: AFP**

Real Madrid 'suffer' in Leipzig draw

Real Madrid scraped through into the Champions League quarter-finals with a 1-1 second-leg draw against RB Leipzig on Wednesday, progressing 2-1 on aggregate. The record 14-time champions were far below their best but did just enough over the two legs of the last-16 clash to edge out their Bundesliga opponents. Despite Leipzig shading the game, Vinicius Junior opened the scoring in the 65th minute after being set up well by Jude Bellingham. Willi Orban quickly levelled for the visitors but they could not find a second goal to force extra-time at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said his team suffered and did not approach the game well mentally.

"We played badly, with little intensity, with worries ... the psychological aspect conditioned our game a lot," Ancelotti told Movistar. "We played against an opponent with quality, who had nothing to lose, and we had the brakes on from start to finish -- we suffered, but the important thing was to get to the quarter-finals." Ancelotti warned his players before the game they needed to be at their best to progress and showed his cautious side by playing four midfielders behind Bellingham and Vinicius. The Italian brought Tchouameni forward into defensive midfield, also deploying Eduardo Camavinga, Fede Valverde and Toni Kroos, as he looked to protect the 1-0 first-leg lead. *—AP*